

AN
AMERICAN SAGA



CARL CHRISTIAN JENSEN

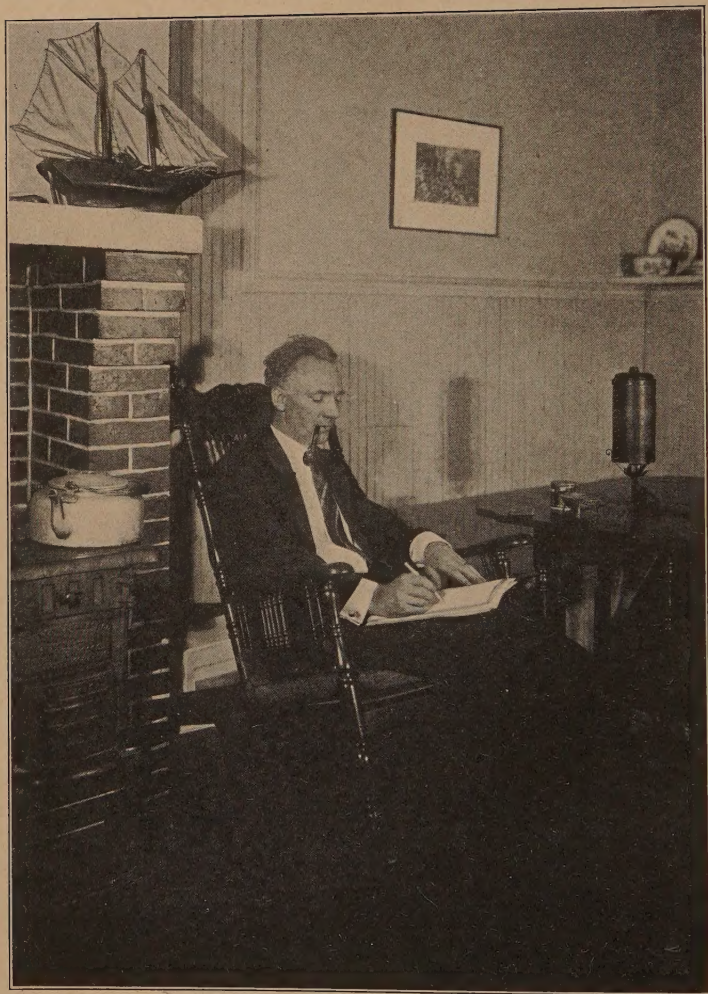
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AN AMERICAN SAGA



Carl Christian Jansen

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BY
CARL CHRISTIAN JENSEN



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1927

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Published, April, 1927

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS PUBLICATIONS
ARE PUBLISHED BY
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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AN AMERICAN SAGA

I

THE OLD COUNTRY

IN a dingy room, over a shop where a man made wooden shoes, I grew aware of myself. The front window faced a narrow cobblestoned street, where the heather farmers passed with their slow-moving teams of oxen and their wagons loaded with sundried peat. The rear window faced a large yard that was closed in on one side by a hulky, odorous tannery and on the other by the sailor inn, Kridtpiben (The Chalk-Pipe). In the rear of the yard a garden with an orchard of dying apple trees sloped down to low, swampy pastures. Beyond these lay the dunes and the sea.

I must have been three years old. I remember rocking my newborn brother out of his cradle. The twins were a year older than I. In the garden we played with the tanner's daughter, Hedvig. I fell into a mortar pit there, and all outside noises died away — Hedvig's cries, the bricklayer scraping his trowel on the wall of the sailor inn, the clattering wheels on the street. The noises within my body demanded a hearing. My blood thundered in my ears; my heart pounded against my

ribs. All my inside cried for air. And as I coughed out my last precious breath my mother's hand reached down and caught me. Then the garden behind the yard was no longer the same.

Hedvig and I were the same age. One day we stole down the cellar steps of the sailor inn and turned the wooden spouts of several beer kegs. The cellar floor became foamy like the sea I had watched so often from the window. We splashed our feet in the white, frothing stuff until no more beer ran out of the spouts. Such fun! But how I feared that cellar ever after!

My mother made soup from oxtails which she fetched from the tannery. Once I followed her into the tannery shed, where she chopped off a dozen oxtails from a stack of fresh raw hides. But I no longer relished the soup she made. For the tannery gave me nausea.

There was only one side of the yard left. I loved to sit beside Hedvig on the steps of the wooden-shoe shop and inhale the odor of seasoned hardwood, watching an old man carve and chisel a formless chunk into a wooden shoe. Hedvig's pink-eyed kitten played with the chips and shavings that coiled up in heaps on the floor while the chunk of hardwood gradually took the shape of a human foot. The heel and arch, the instep and toes, bulged out of the outer surface and caved into the inner surface.

Our eyes followed the curves of the wooden

shoe. Hedvig said that the curves "talked to her." And she said that her eyes drew these curves of the wooden shoe on the inside of her eyelids. And she said that the picture inside her eyelids talked to her when she closed them — talked to her as did the curves of the wooden shoe outside. So Hedvig told me.

One day we went beyond the known boundary of our little world. We passed the cows lying on their stomachs in the pasture behind the garden, chewing their cuds. We followed a brook, where the song birds cooled themselves under the water plants. We reached a sandy road along the coast and met a farmer, sitting asleep on his load of peat, while his oxen sank knee-deep in the sand. We waded through coarse dune grass and fell down tired.

The sea lay quiet like a mirror, meeting the sky in the horizon. Smoke from the steamers rose in black, graceful columns that carried the dome of heaven. Hedvig's cheeks were flushed from the long walk. She lay with her head resting in my lap, gazing up into the sky.

We were found at night by a fisherman, who carried us to his hut on the coast. And after our return home Hedvig was in bed many weeks. Daily I was at her bedside. And always she held my hand tight — very tight. When, one afternoon, she felt stronger, she wanted to sit in the sun on the porch. Her mother carried her out

there and left us alone. Her eyes turned to the sky again, and a smile lighted up her face — and remained. . . .

Her mother loosened my hand from Hedvig's cold grip and hugged me hysterically, and with a sudden violence and heartbreaking despair. She carried me to my mother; and the two ran back to Hedvig, leaving me alone with a new feeling of awe.

My grandfather was a man huge of frame and sturdy as an old oak. He was six feet six, with a back broad and sinewy, and with large, hairy fists. He was of a melancholy, brooding temperament, his mind burning like glowing embers that could flare into white heat. And when his anger was aroused he would stand tall and straight, with his arms crossed, his head lifted, his forehead high, smooth, and florid, and his eyes scintillating. It was not his words that terrified his wife and daughters, but rather the amplitude of his voice, and the rapidity with which he spoke. Only one of his seven daughters ever dared defy him — my mother. She would walk toward the angry Titan, look him in the eye, but remain silent. And he would lift his fists as if to crush her, but his arms would drop powerless. Then he would wander down to the coast and remain there, brooding.

I have never met a man with such physical strength, or with such anger and gentleness, or with such silence and "gift of gab." He came of

peasant stock. And because he was a true peasant his deepest disappointment was that he had no sons. He had served his country twice — first as the King's bodyguard, later during the German invasion of 1864. His property consisted of a small farm of peat bog, heather, and sand dunes. During the centuries an ancient oak forest had rotted, leaving a bog with a five-foot layer of muddy peat sandwiched in between the heather and the dunes. In the summer time he sliced off loads of mud, cutting the peat into bricks, which he threw to the surface to be baked by the sun. With his spade he carved his way through the bog, while his wife and daughters carried the peat away. Through several summers I saw him stand to his waist in mud, silent and melancholy. But he had only his wife to help him then.

His love for me was the only affection that I remember receiving in my childhood. He liked to have me visit him on the farm. At night we slept together, the old giant and I. A piece of rope hung from the ceiling over his bed, by means of which he would raise himself in the morning. He lay there the night long, embracing me with his huge, muscular arms, while I snuggled up to him hungrily.

His seven daughters ran away from home as soon as they became of age. His fluctuating moods drove them out. And for peasant daughters they married well. Malie became the second wife of my father's brother, who owned a hog farm. Anna

married an old, long-whiskered bachelor, who bought a farm with the savings of toil in America. Juliana and Line became the brides of fairly prosperous dairy farmers. Sine and Tine married peasants of the sand dunes. Stine, my mother, was the only one who ran away to the harbor town.

I remember the seven sisters vividly — tall, husky, bright-eyed women, very noisy, quick to laugh, and quicker still to show anger. God! What a temper some of them had — especially my own mother! Once she broke a broom handle in two on my head.

At my grandparents' golden wedding the seven sisters and their broods of children met together on the old farm. And they talked and "joshed" each other and quarreled in their loud, broad peasant dialect, worse than a group of drunken sailors in The Chalk-Pipe. They are all alive at present except Malie. None save my mother have changed their social standing greatly.

My grandmother was a small, slender woman, cowed by her strong husband. None of her daughters looked like her. Her parents, who were a grade above peasants, were against her wedding my grandfather. Her brother was a wealthy horse trader, whose son, my mother's cousin, was the peach on the family tree. How proud my aunts were of him! For he was a lay preacher and a revivalist, holding religious meetings at night in

the barns of the peasants — a sincere but dull, unattractive man, as I remember him.

My father's parents died long before I was born. A black mystery hangs over his ancestors. And he refused to talk about them. But the fact is this, as I discovered later: his family for generations had gone to the devil. Some of them I saw with my own eyes go there. I remember his aunt, — his father's sister, — an old, old beggar woman, walking on the cobblestoned streets with a stick in one hand and a basket in the other. She told me of a "curse" that had haunted the family for ages, ruining a line of wealthy, powerful lairds in the valleys south of Frederikshavn. One estate after another had been lost by fire, flood, and famine, by drinking and gambling, and by the abolition of serfdom, when the peasants gained their independence. In her youth her own estate — and this I verified later — had been sold at public auction. She died in the poorhouse.

Two of my father's brothers, Unge-Jens and Gamle-Jens (Young Jens and Old Jens), fared the best — though the latter almost went to the devil before my mother's sister, Malie, took hold of his hog farm. He suffered all through life for the wild oats of his youth. His youngest son, who at present enjoys the reputation of being the slyest and most daring smuggler in the seas of Skagerrack and Cattegat, once lowered me into a deep well, headfirst, to fetch a ball. Unge-Jens literally starved on

various rented farms, while he and his wife brought up twelve sons. A third brother, Nikolaj, I remember as a bleary-eyed drunkard, whose wife and children I often saw walking from house to house begging crusts of bread. I was at his side the day before he died and saw him chew mouthfuls of bed-straw. He died of delirium tremens in the same poorhouse and in the same room as did his aunt. A fourth brother left the Old Country for Australia and was never heard from. A fifth went to America — Anton was his name — and was never heard from, either. (To-day in an American prison of the South a young man, bearing my surname and not a few of the family traits, is serving ninety-nine years for murder. He tells me that his father, whose name was Anton, is dead, and that he came from a small country in Europe called Denmark.)

My world grew. The fifth child was born in my fifth year. The twins were going to school. My mother was always away from home during the day, sewing or washing for the rich grocer and the wealthy people across the street. My father was a longshoreman, working on the steamers in the harbor. The tanner's wife took care of Anton and Lasse. And I was much alone.

On the dumping grounds of a clay pit I picked up bones and cowhorns, which I sold to the junk dealer. He paid me with copper coins which I spent for Danish pastry. Once I came into his junk yard

when he was busy elsewhere. Hurriedly I stuck a pair of cowhorns from a heap into my sack. My heart began to beat fast. This was my first theft. He recognized the horns as soon as he peered into my sack, and threw them back on to the heap. But instead of getting angry he looked at me with a dismal expression in his eyes. He hooked my sack on to his scales and threw me a few coppers, according to the weight of the bones, and turned his back to me in disgust. And his scorn smarted longer than a thrashing would have done.

Near an old church a street was being lowered, and the workingmen were excavating a forgotten churchyard. Bones dyed in a vat of mud were dug up by the wagonload. One morning I filled my sack from the excavation and carried the bones to the junk dealer. But he refused to buy them, because they were black and decayed, and because they were human bones. He placed his hand on my head and looked at me with his grave, sombre eyes, bowed his head, and bade me return the bones.

The wealthy grocer for whom my mother worked imported a dozen Shetland ponies from the Orkney Islands. Coming across the North Sea the ponies had become ill, and by mistake the grocer gave them poison instead of medicine. I saw them roll on the straw in his stable in paroxysmal torture. I was distressed at their suffering. The grocer and his wife were weeping. Yet my compassion for the

sick animals was not able to remove my greed for their bones. When they had been killed I followed the stableman out to the heather and helped him to dig a grave. I shoveled the sand away from the edge as he threw it up to me. Soon the grave was so deep that his head was below the level of the heather. It would be strenuous work to dig up my treasure again.

We returned to the stable and drove a wagonload of dead ponies to the grave on the heather. The heather impressed me. It was clean and fragrant. I braided wreaths of heather flowers and placed these on the grave, and I marked the spot carefully, planning to return the following spring. Before the northern winter set in with snow and frost I was back, watching and dreaming over the ponies' bones. But during the winter I lost all trace of the place. I was never able to find my buried treasure.

Fjolle-Valde, a mute beggar boy, ransacked the neighborhood with me. His eyes looked into mine with the devotion of a dumb beast, and he granted me a half-witted friendship in exchange for my own interest in him. He belonged to a destitute family. His father had been my mother's fiancé previous to her marriage. But a scullery maid in the hotel where my mother worked had forestalled a tryst one night between the two lovers by borrowing my mother's only pair of shoes without asking. The lovers had quarreled. My mother had married my father, who was twice her age; and her lover had

married a woman many years his senior. My knowledge of my mother's first romance drew me to Fjolle-Valde with the compassion of one who had been saved from a great calamity.

One day my desire to see Fjolle-Valde's mother drove me across the town to his home. On a painter's ladder in a dirty yard I climbed to the attic, where the gable door swung outward and almost pushed me off. I groped my way among bins of peat fuel that belonged to the tenants on the floor below. Through a roof window a sunbeam, bedizened with dust, stabbed into the darkness like a bejeweled rapier. And through the cracks in the red-tiled roof smaller beams of light penetrated. Children of various ages crawled around there, and, beaverlike, trailed paths of wet dirt across the floor. An untidy woman with her breasts exposed welcomed me and scrutinized me as wistfully as I did her. So this creature was the pick of the man who had jilted my beautiful mother! Yet, in her attic she aroused in me a cringing curiosity, which even later impelled me to pay her secret visits.

A horse butcher in the neighborhood would often send Fjolle-Valde and me into the country to bring back old critters that he had bought from a village grocer. And during the light summer nights, homeward bound, we rode over the sand dunes on the back of the same horse. He never entrusted us with more than one at a time. The full moon reddened the dunes and heather, and a sharp Oriental

camel shadow stole along beside the skinny nag and its two riders. Ever so often Fjolle-Valde fell off, at times hauling me with him headlong into the sand. And it was no easy task to catch the frightened animal in the dune grass and thorny bush growth.

In a dark alley near my home lived a dwarflike woman. She was a "peat hag" — one of those poor, hard-working creatures who on wintry days hoisted peat from the farmer's wagon to the attics of the rich. She drank brandy — the ugly stuff which the lay preacher said was made of dung from the streets. *Akvavit*, "the water of life," it was called in The Chalk-Pipe. Often she sat crouched on the stoop, tottering like a bear, and between hiccoughs warbled weird hallelujah hymns. Her hands, with their stubby fingers, resembled human feet. And when she sent me to the sailor inn for a pint of *Akvavit* she stroked my cheek brusquely, as though she had kicked me in the face with a bare foot.

At times she wept and sobbed convulsively, and besmeared her face with peat-stained paws. Then I ran after brandy as frantically as on my trip to the midwife on the night my sister was born. And a mere gulp of *Akvavit* revived the daunted witch.

She lived with her grown children — two helpless idiots, who night and day sat strapped to their benches in the only room she had. One was a

grinning bewhiskered female, and the other was a reeling male, who dug his fingers into a furrow on the bench. Once a week my mother sent me to the peat hag with dry flounders. And at the smell of fish the female, like a baby strapped in its carriage, bounced impetuously on the bench, and drove through her throat a guttural sound that conveyed a world of bursting clouds within. The brother neither heard nor smelled. He only stared in listless apathy like a hunger-striking martyr before his last raucous breath. He was busy scratching a solitary label deep into the wood — a cuneiform gesture chronicling his own world of idiocy.

Karla was the daughter of the wealthy railroad master in the house across the street, where my mother worked. She was as beautiful as Hedvig and her clothes were soft and fragrant. One afternoon we tramped through the woods that began at the end of the cobblestoned street. An innocent curiosity led us on. Her mother's anger surprised me. She flared up and grew wild like an angry gypsy hag and added a tantalizing riddle to an inscrutable mystery. From then I was branded as a bad boy in the neighborhood. And I was only six years of age.

During the summer a half-grown Copenhagen girl was visiting her aunt, who also lived in the house across the street. One day I was sitting by myself on the stoop of The Chalk-Pipe, watching

the farmers drive their ox teams and their products to market. I caught her eyes resting on me — dark, burning eyes. She smiled and crossed the street. I was too bashful to talk to her. How beautiful she was! The odor of her body resembled the freshest butter. I sniffed at it. And her hands possessed a touch delicate and energetic.

We followed the oxcarts to the market place, where she bought me fruits and sweets. And we continued our walk to the end of the cobblestoned street and into the woods. Hand in hand we waded through layers of leaves. We sat down on the moss under an oak and listened to the language of silence.

She began to romp in the leaves like a wood nymph that I had seen in a picture book. And she flew around me and leaped in hiding behind the oaks, and dashed toward me, catching me up in her arms and running into the underbrush with me pressed to her body. Her eyes were agitated. She opened her mouth wide and showed me her tongue and teeth. She growled coquettishly, and with a sudden impulse pressed her teeth into the skin of my throat.

On my visits to my grandfather I met my cousin, Stine. She was born out of wedlock, of one of his seven daughters. And she was a wild girl who feared nobody except my grandfather, whom everybody feared. At night in the hog pen she watched over the breed-sows, while I lay in the arms of my

grandfather, pondering, and while the sea, the heather, the cattle, and the grown-ups slept.

We took a swim one day in the brown peat bog. Her husky limbs and flat, sunburned peasant face reminded me of an Eskimo woman I had seen aboard a sailing vessel in the harbor. She was not beautiful like Hedvig, and Karla, and the rich Copenhagen girl. But she was terribly strong. She held me so close to her that I bit her breast in anger. Then she threw me headlong into an ant hill. And the ants stung me and filled my wounds with a burning secretion. I cried until she knelt down and massaged my body with peat mud.

In the woods a band of gypsies had put up camp. The gypsies were kidnappers, so I was told. And my mother forbade me to approach them. But the warning aroused my curiosity. Indian-like, I crept through the grass and through the layers of leaves until, within a stone's throw of the camp, I beheld ragged children and men with fierce pirate faces, blooming girls and wrinkled old hags. They swarmed among their tents and vans, quarreling with each other and kicking their dogs.

In the leaves near me a gypsy woman sat squatting with a pipe between her teeth. Beside her lay a young girl with raven-black hair spread out on the ground. The girl was ill. She moaned and writhed in agony, while the woman sat beside her smoking. At first the gypsies in camp caught my interest more than did the couple nearer at hand. But

soon my senses became captivated by the delivery of a child. . . . The mother turned her head weakly and lifted her eyes to gaze at her child. And oh, the look of pain and love! It haunts me still. I ran home, weeping.

I joined a gang of boys and roamed the streets till late at night. We made ourselves chestnut pipes and smoked dry cherry leaves. And I learned to swear worse than any sailor. I would utter the common national curses: "Cancer eat me (*Kræft æde mig*) if this is not the truth," and "May the Devil make me crazy (*Fanden gale mig*) if this is not so," and "That is an all-hellish lie (*Det er en allerhelvedes Løgn*)."

At first I was shocked at myself. But soon I grew more callous than the rest of the gang. One night I was unable to fall asleep. I was thinking of all the curses I had said that day and about my friend the junk dealer, who had hanged himself in his shed during the afternoon. I stole out of bed, dressed without awakening my parents, and walked out into the cobblestoned street, where a peasant's oxcart was passing by. The street watchman was singing his two-o'clock rhyme. I ran over and dropped my chestnut pipe in the cart. Then I went home and fell asleep.

Besides cursing and smoking, I also learned to steal. The bigger boys taught me to steal cakes from the pastry shops. They were errand boys for

the rich grocer, and they would induce me to follow them into the stores where they delivered flour and raisins. While the saleslady followed them into the bakery behind the store I would fill my blouse with Danish pastry. And I was so excited at first that I forgot to watch the street through the show window. Once a wealthy woman saw me steal. She caught me dropping a kringle into my blouse. And when she entered the store she fetched four more kringles out of my bulky blouse. My boy friends scolded me to mislead the baker, who had been awakened from his slumber. And they promised him not to take me with them again. But I kept on stealing. I even began to steal money from my mother, first copper coins, then small silver coins, spending the money for sweets and tobacco.

The gang had its headquarters in the butchery, where we often watched the butcher aim a revolver at a worn-out critter which stood blindfolded in front of him. Then the fatal shot! And the horse dropped to the ground, stiff and lifeless. The cows were knocked down with a stroke of an axe. There was a knob on the flat end of the axe, and this knob generally crushed their skulls with a single blow. Sometimes, however, the cows were with calf — a small calf, three inches long, or a larger calf with hair on its body. Such a cow was "tough-lived." One stroke of the axe did not always floor it.

We imitated the butcher's curses and began to chew his black tobacco. And we grew lusty for

blood. I followed my gang into the cemetery, where we shot song birds with sling shots. The trees were full of birds and we shot without aiming. My first shot brought down one, and it zigzagged through the air like a coin through deep water. I caught the little thing in my hand. The bird was still warm and was gasping for breath. Then I petted it with my finger tips and stroked its feathers. And I grew aware of a curious, pleasant sensation, not only in my fingers, but penetrating through my body.

We went hunting for bird nests. I stuck my arm into a thorny hedge and tore one out of its hiding. Four downy ones fell to the ground, while the mother bird cried so loud that the cemetery keeper gave us chase. He followed me home. And I was whipped with *Spanskrøret* (the Spanish reed). This was the only real whipping that my father ever gave me. And from that day I was never again cruel to birds — except perhaps to my parrots at sea, years later, when I was training them to talk.

I often wondered at these streaks of cruelty, for I was also tender-hearted. I remember, for example, when the cemetery keeper once drained and refilled a cement pond for a shoal of goldfish. While the pond was being drained and the old keeper was wading with sea boots in the shallow water, the fish came closer and closer together. I was in a panic lest he should step on them. Some-

times one would swim under his heel before he put his foot down. And my heart would leap up in my throat, for fear that he might crush it. When the fish escaped I was relieved.

I also remember crossing a bridge where a woman stood throwing her poodle into the dam below. The dog rolled through the air, and its soft, curly stomach struck the water with a thud. Quite exhausted, it reached the surface again and swam ashore, crawling back to the woman on the bridge. Again and again she threw the poodle into the dam. Its strength gave out, and, panting and waddling, without making headway against the current, it was no longer able to swim ashore. I ran down to the edge of the dam and helped the poodle ashore with a stick. It climbed to the woman, puled and fawned, and lay down at her feet. And I burst into tears, in the presence of my gang, for fear that she might throw it out again.

There was a chapel in the cemetery, behind which we found glass beads from discarded wreaths. It was a common belief that if we ran around the chapel three times and then looked through the keyhole we should see the Devil. I wanted to show my gang that I disbelieved this. Once I took courage and ran around the chapel and peeked through the keyhole. I saw something moving inside — the Devil, I thought. And I fled away over hedges and gravestones. Someone was following me — the cemetery keeper, who had been hiding in the chapel.

One Sunday morning I followed the people inside the State church, where I beheld a full-rigged sailing vessel in miniature, swinging on a wire. The immense columns and vast arches filled me with holy ecstasy, unknown to me in the barren sectarian church to which my parents had been converted. The State church drew me with wistful longings. I went home and whispered the Lord's Prayer seven times to myself.

The school nipped my delinquency in the bud. The school of my early childhood was situated near the harbor next to the State church. From the classroom windows I had a full view of the harbor. I could see every ship that passed in and out of its narrow mouth. The round granite fort, Krudttaarnet (the Powder Tower), with its tiled, cone-shaped roof and its cannon pointing seaward, lay a stone's throw away. A fleet of fishing cutters lay rocking side by side in one corner of the harbor. Farther to the right the steamers and sailing vessels were unloading their cargoes. In a shipyard near by a new cutter was frequently being launched, throwing a white wave high in air, and scudding off to get its finishing touch, its mast and rigging. The shallow Triangle and Square lay in the shadows of the left harbor wing, crowded with dories, sailboats, and small pleasure yachts. The two harbor wings swung seaward in long, graceful curves and terminated in a red and green light-

house. Beyond the harbor wings, far seaward, Stendiget (Rocky Dike) rose out of the water like a phantom ship. Still farther seaward another reef, Hirtsholmen, with its beacon light and foghorn and its two or three dwelling houses, skimmed the horizon.

And many fascinating people passed by outside the classroom windows. Tall fishermen in yellow oilskin suits and sou'westers came by. They were clean-shaven except for a tuft of blond beard on the throat — an extension of the thick growth on their chests — that was pruned off abruptly from ear to ear under their jawbones, and always reminded me of that man Esau, peeping out of his hairy ape-skin. Behind them came their wives, pushing the wheelbarrows, which were loaded with bundles of nets that had a hook and a rain worm on every mesh, and a flexible rim of cork and of lead on the edges. Each sailor that entered port passed the school and the church on his way from his ship to the sailor inn. Once a Negro sailor passed by on the street outside, the first I had ever seen. My heart beat as when I read about Robinson Crusoe finding Friday. Another time a group of Chinese stokers came chattering by. And once a queenly lady and her bodyguard of twelve uniformed sailors marched by from her steam yacht. She was a German *Grevinde* (countess), the teacher said — immensely wealthy, and slightly demented. All this I was able to see from the classroom windows.

The walls of the classroom were hung with pictures. Three of these made a profound impression on me: a fox that had an alert look like Karla's mother, with its offspring, outside its den in the dunes; a barnyard with a cow licking its calf, so sad and lugubrious, like the junk dealer, that my eyes grew moist when I looked at it; old Abraham — he looked like my grandfather — standing with a dagger in his hand beside his son, Isaac, who was bound hand and foot, and was lying on top of a smoking cord of wood. I was alarmed lest the old patriarch should use the dagger too soon.

I remember my school-teachers only by their method of punishing me. The singing teacher specialized in ear-pulling, until he was arrested for injuring the ear of a boy. The gymnastics teacher, who later went to Africa to save the heathen, had a knack of burning my cheeks with the flat of his palm. The teacher of Danish slapped my hands with a ruler. The teacher of religion always lost his temper and whacked my ears clumsily. Frøken Lem, my only woman teacher, used her walking stick on my back. Once she administered thirty-nine licks on my back for hitting her with a snowball. I had a strong dislike for her. She was in charge of the boys on the playground, where she spoiled many a good game. It was also her duty — and to my great chagrin — to keep watch at the showers and "scrubbing pool" during our compulsory semimonthly bath.

There were other teachers — one whom we called “Goliath” because he was very tall, and another whom we called “the Fish” because he was wobbly on his feet. But they did not leave any permanent impression on my memory. I do not even recall the subjects they taught. The former once gave me a whack that sent me spinning because I had forgotten his real name and addressed him in public by his nickname. And the latter once pinched my thigh because I refused to sit beside a girl whose breath was bad. My arithmetic teacher was fond of lifting me upon his knee in front of the class and rubbing his grizzly Vandyke beard against my cheek. I squirmed in his arms the hour long. The principal was a chummy gentleman with gold-rimmed glasses and the proud possessor of a fountain pen — the only one in town. Once he lost it, and I found it. His joy knew no bounds when I handed it back to him.

I attended school from seven o'clock in the morning until noon, six days a week. The summer vacation was four weeks in length, and the Christmas and Easter vacations one week each. Every hour of the long forenoon I changed teachers. And I learned to fear and obey them. To this day I tremble when I think of these early years of schooling. I also learned the three R's thoroughly. I learned many Bible stories and poetic hymns and patriotic songs by heart — likewise the reigns of all the Danish kings from Gorm den Gamle

to Kristian den Niende. But, above all else, I learned to use my eyes.

Soon my childhood world included the harbor, with its steamers and sailing vessels, its wharves and piers. Many an early morning before school I climbed a mast, watching a hundred fishing cutters sail out of the harbor, and envying the pilots going out in their sailboats to meet the ships that came from the four corners of the earth. I lived in the forecastle or on the ratlines of these visitors, and ate the hardtack the sailors gave me. Before I was nine I tried to hide in an outgoing steamer, but was found and sent back with the pilot.

I watched the busy toilers — my father included — unload tea and spices from the Orient, maize from America, Russian wheat, fruit from Spain and Italy. I imitated the sailors by decorating my arm with red and blue ink figures — writhing snakes, reproductions of Adam and Eve, wild tigers. A full-rigged sailing vessel rocked on my chest. Anchors drawn on my palms, with chains twisting around my arms and neck, held the vessel safe.

At night I became handy boy in The Chalk-Pipe, where I swept floors, washed tables, and rinsed glasses. This was life. Here the sea captains came to hire sailors for their ships in the harbor. Here fishermen came to sell their cargoes of new-caught flounders to the exporter. Here shipbuilders and shipowners met to discuss plans and prices for a new ship. When the steaming

drink — a mixture of tea, sugar, and Akvavit — made these men merry, they spun wonderful yarns about wrecks and life-savings and drowned mates, and about their adventures in foreign lands.

At a table in the centre sat Captain Olsen, — the master of the lighthouse, — a man with huge shoulders and a thick neck that had ridges and ravines, craters and warts, like a lunar map. Here sat the rich herring dealer, whom I disliked because he smelled of herring, and because his face bore the likeness of a herring, with its worried, parsimonious stare. Here sat Bette-Fanden (Little Satan), a barrel-shaped fisherman, whose dazed countenance bespoke the fool, yet whose hidden shrewdness turned all business to his own advantage, and who more than once was able to cheat the herring dealer. Here sat an old rope spinner, whose habit, when he became talkative, of walking backward around the table, as though he were spinning rope, made everybody roar with laughter. And here the old harbor master was a constant visitor. For twenty years he had served the King at St. Thomas. The West Indian sun had shrunk his hide, but he was sinewy and strong as a mule. Once I saw him throw across the table the fat horse butcher, who had entered The Chalk-Pipe without proper credentials.

Often I heard him tell the fishermen and the sea captains of his ancestors. When he was a child of my own age his father, who was then pastor of the

parish, offered public prayers to God to send the fishermen a shipwreck. There was no rescue crew to shoot off the rocket and life line and to haul the shipwrecked sailors ashore. And when a ship foundered on the sand bars and its crew drowned, the fishermen gathered up the cargo, and gave God thanks.

Still further back, when his father was a child, the fishermen would walk along the coast at night with colored lanterns to deceive the sailors at sea and make them believe that the lights were from other ships nearer shore. In this manner many sailing vessels foundered on the sand bars.

What had changed the human heart? I used to wonder at this. His grandfather had been a mean sea pirate. His father had been a saint and a shipwrecker. And he himself had been the first man on the coast to organize a rescue crew.

One night I watched the wreck of a large sailing vessel. It occurred on one of those demon nights of the North, when the evil powers of water, wind, and snow wrestled for supremacy. The harbor master came rushing into The Chalk-Pipe with salt water dripping from his oilskin suit and sou'-wester. On stormy nights he always took his turn down on the coast, keeping a lookout for shipwrecks, and inspecting the life-saving rockets in the rescue stations. He ordered every man in The Chalk-Pipe down to the coast. And I followed the men. We pushed against the wind and slid down

the dunes, climbed over the bowlders, and ran along the coast, until we found the shipwreck. Five hundred yards seaward the sailing vessel lay rolling on the sand bar like an immense sea bird bashing its broken wings in the surf. On the coast lay the skeleton of an old wreck. The harbor master set it on fire. Its tarred ribs caught readily, and soon the yellow flames and black smoke shot weird tongues into the air, dyeing the froth of the surf. I saw the sailors cling to the ratlines and shrouds, while surge upon surge leaped up from the depth.

The harbor master and his crew of weather-beaten fishermen got the tripod, the powder, and the rocket ready for a shot at the wreck. The line lay coiled up, sleek and light, for its race through the gale. He took slow and careful aim before he lighted the fuse. The line flew up with a jerk and out over the surf, leaving a trail of fire in its wake. But as its speed decreased it drifted with the wind and got entangled in the jib stay on the outermost point of the boom. He made ready for another rocket, while a sailor on the wreck crawled out on the boom to fetch the line.

"He'll never get back from there," remarked Bette-Fanden. "Better not lose any time."

One surge after another washed over the fellow, shrouding him from view. He caught hold of the line and was ready to return when a breaker tore the boom to pieces, flinging him into the sea. Bette-Fanden hauled him ashore like a fish. The

next line landed midships. The sailors hauled an attached hawser aboard and fastened it to the main mast. And the rescue crew was able, by means of a pulley line, to pull a conveyor basket out along the thrumming hawser.

Twenty men were hauled ashore, one by one, before the ship broke in two. The ends of the hull rolled away from each other and spurted masses of water into the air, like a pair of exploding sea bombs. And through the night the sea threw the rest of the men upon the boulders. The harbor master laid them near the smouldering bonfire. Eight, I counted.

Afternoons I worked in a hand-driven rope spinnery which was built on the sand along the open coast. The wooden flywheel was not even enclosed in a shed. A row of pine crosses, carrying the twisting yarns, strands, and hawsers, extended along the coast for a full mile. A bonfire for a tar pot and a shed for the hemp bales completed the primitive spinnery.

A hundred yards away the surf rolled in over the boulders. And between the surf and the spinnery a flock of sea gulls sought shelter. Sometimes they would fly up with a noise as though a boulder had been blasted and was scattering in many pieces; and sometimes they would rest themselves upon the twisting yarns, where their claws would get caught in the hemp and they would whirl around

with the spindles, until the spinners, on their return for a fresh start, kicked them off.

At the age of seven I started to turn the wooden wheel. From bundles around their waists the five old spinners payed out wads of hemp on to the twisting rope yarns, until far on the horizon they looked like black dots. For a whole mile they walked backward, placing their yarns between pegs upon the pine crosses, and at last thrumming the yarns as a signal for me to stop for a moment until they fastened the yarn ends to a loose log. When I turned the wheel again, the yarns twisted themselves into a thick strand. So went the afternoon. A one-mile backward dash, and five yarns were spun; five backward dashes, and five thick strands were spun. Out of these the ship hawser, like a huge sea worm, suddenly came writhing into existence.

With this monster did I wrestle while I turned the wheel. I held it by the snout until it groaned. Its tentacles were hooked taut on to the spindles, and its one-mile-long body stretched itself upon the boulders, and its hairy segments creaked as they twisted themselves tighter around each other. On "dipping days" the hawser slid through my hands as I drowned it under the hot tar, inch by inch, while the spinners wound it into a coil. Then its fibre splinters tore the skin off my fingers, and the friction blistered my hands.

In the rope spinnery I had time to talk to myself.

Out of the frail, short hemp fibre, plucked from plants on foreign soil, baled into compressed, disorganized masses, had come this long hawser. The hawser was all hemp, and the bale was all hemp. Yet what a difference!

And I watched the shaggy old spinners as much as I did the gulls, the sea, and the wooden wheel. What else could I do but watch the moving objects and discuss them with myself, pinned as I was the long afternoon to the wheel? Their weird, backward walk caught my eye first. They faced me and shrank away from me like ghosts of the sea. Their bodies swayed and twisted from side to side in rhythm with their feet, which slid slowly over sand and rocks, groping for a ground grip. I took notice of their fingers, shredding the hemp fibre from bundles around their waists, and paying it out evenly to the twisting yarns. With what rapid motion their fingers tore the hemp off the bundle! Their hands caught the right amount, seizing the threads with their hairy, crooked fingers. Their hands were like huge spiders. And when they snatched new bundles, as the old ones gave out, and wrapped them around their waists, — snatched with one hand while the other hand continued to spin, — they were like sleight-of-hand performers in the market place. Then my eyes were not even able to follow their motions.

On the other side of the wooden flywheel the pulleys, belts, and spindles whirled around each

other almost as smoothly as did the gulls in the air. The moment I started to swing the handle these began to revolve — some fast, others slow, but all moving together and stopping together. I followed my own invisible hand power with my eyes through the motions of the whole mechanism, from the handle of the flywheel far out along the twisting hemp yarns on the pine crosses.

From pulleys to belts, from spindles to hemp yarns, leaped my hand power. The wheel made me sweat and made my heart pound, and at times stopped my breath entirely. When the yarns were being spun, I gave out only a slight amount of hand power. But when the strand was being spun from the yarns I gave out much more. And during the making of a hawser from the strands I gave the wheel all that was in me. Then the wheel stopped at the moment I took my hands off the handle. It did not continue a few extra turns by itself, as it always did during the spinning of the hemp yarns, when I was able to make excursions within a radius of ten steps while the wheel continued to turn. For, even if it did slow down during my absence, I would rush back and leap up on the box again to reach the handle and turn the wheel double fast. And soon the new twists would catch up with those at the other end that were waning.

Above the spinnery the sea gulls dived and soared, their wings stretching and relaxing, their small heads, calm eyes, capable beaks, and pliable

necks steering them safely through the thick of the traffic. On the blue sky they scrawled mystic symbols and drew curves of infinite variety. Perhaps the gulls had learned their own code of wing writing. Perhaps they talked to each other in a written code of curves. And perhaps their talk was less equivocal than human speech. For they never collided.

Far at sea the surges from the tide were like endless hawsers in the process of being spun. Their spiral-shaped segments turned around, and their hemp fibre whirled on the circumference. I imagined that the fishing cutters were the rope spinners. They disappeared on the horizon like the spinners ashore. The tide that twisted the surges around was the wooden wheel. But I was not able to imagine the spinnery lad who turned that wheel. The tide that moved the sea gave me a feeling of awe — especially when the wind did not disturb the water. I found something that I was unable to discuss with myself save by means of my feelings — a supreme power, perhaps, nameless, and mysteriously entrancing.

II

THE SEA IS CALLING

A DECADE before my birth, and a few miles south of the rope spinnery where I scanned the sea for years, Jens Peter Jacobsen wrote: "She should be naked like a surge, and the wild beauty of the ocean must haunt within her. There must be some of the summer sea's phosphorescence over her skin, some of the black, entangled horror of the seaweed forests in her hair. Yes, in her eyes the thousand colors of water must go and come in gleaming changes; her pale breast must be cool with a sensuous freshness; the billows murmur their cradle song through all her curves, and there is the suction of the Maelstrom in her kiss, and the bursting softness of the surf in her arms' embrace." He wrote the truth, for the mermaid and the sea are one.

While I turned the wooden wheel, the sea lured me incessantly. At night in the sailor inn the tales of the sailors enticed me. At school the ships in the harbor coaxed me the forenoon long. On Sundays I would borrow a dory from a fisherman and rig it up with mast and lateen sail. And I

would skip out of the harbor and cruise along the coast, through the surf and over the sand bars, from dawn to dusk. And the sea bewitched me as a charming woman would a man. I was in love with the sea, mad in my reveries of the sea, reckless in my escapades on the sea. I have often wondered that I never drowned.

Once I went to sea in my dory north of the harbor to sail home a girl who had sprained her ankle during a hike with a group of her school friends. Her name was Marie. A squall came up and drove us seaward. And the squall threw us upon Rocky Dike, where the fishermen went to their grave. Thousands of sea birds were resting upon the huge boulders that encircled Rocky Dike. In the northern dusk the reef appeared like a funeral wreath thrown down from Heaven.

We kept in shelter behind a boulder and pulled the dory with us. A gull, flying up from a nest, awoke myriads of birds, which in a moment thickened the air and magnified the roar of wind and breakers. Marie put her hand down in the nest and caressed the downy things that crouched together there. And they opened their beaks and wrestled with her fingers. Then the mother came darting. Above us rolled billows of birds, with motions, colors, sounds, like a gale sweeping over the sea. They swung so near that their wings whipped our cheeks.

"I want to go home," Marie cried. "I want

my mother." But a surge answered her by carrying a log against the rock, crushing the log in two like a piece of straw.

Her agile body played hide and seek within my greenish oilskin suit. Wide sea boots sheltered her feet. And she was hooded by a sombre sou'-wester. Her lips puckered in wistful reveries. Her eyelashes sent out a spray of delicate beauty. She whisked a drop of sea foam from her cheek, assuring herself that it was not a tear. She closed her eyes and snuggled up to me.

And I built her a fire of tarred driftwood. Its yellow tongues paled her face against the tar smoke like alabaster on black velvet. Her pupils grew and dilated with the flaring flames. The live coals warmed my blood, until I gasped with an ecstasy that took my breath away. Darkness shrouded us. The glow of coals threw a crimson blush into Marie's face. An ember flew up, uncertain as a butterfly alighting on a flower. It swayed with the air current and fell upon her hand, which I was holding. The ember threw a searchlight into her sleeve. We were stunned and not able to move a finger. Then a shriek and a jerk — and I sat empty-handed.

Two nights later we rowed safely into the harbor in my dory, while the church bells wrongly tolled her death. For she was the wealthy grocer's daughter.

One Sunday I was lying in the dying dune grass

of early fall, drying my naked body in the afternoon sun and gazing at the sea. Such fawning homage did I pay the sea before I stirred that the wealthy Baron, the very ruler of the good land beyond the dunes, stole upon me on his thoroughbred and touched his whip lightly to my buttocks. "Kid!" he said. "Give my mare a swim. It'll do her good."

With a single leap I mounted the horse, straddling her girth and neck like a jockey, pressing my face into her mane, and with hissing delight inhaled her odor. I jerked my heels into her flanks, annoyed by her timidity in getting off. She slid down the fallow bluff, wincing at the fungus-covered flotsam of the shore. Fear drove a vapor from her body and made her heart thump through her shoulders and withers. She neighed with cutting dismay, like the siren of a ship in distress.

I lashed her hip with the flat of my palm. In springy curvets she vaulted through the shallow water, prancing through seashells, dipping her feet in shoals of gamboling shrimps and minnows, until the seaweed brushed her thighs and loins. She whinnied like a cooing dove, turned her head in the air, sniffed the breeze into her nostrils, and stopped. I swung a fist into her ribs, until she bounced and rebounded through purple sea verdure, through a sea of depth and motion. Her nose, poking into the peak of the swell, snatched

stridulous whiffs of air. And she voiced her fears with a snort.

I clung to her neck. My hand clasped her windpipe and my fingers bored themselves into her jugular vein. I jerked my heels into her flanks. My right hand held the reins. Out into rough water I steered her. Between my own grunts and savage yells I swallowed and spat up the eddies, and in my wild delight forgot the danger. Dusk enveloped us in its gray, mongrel shadow when we began to sink. The horse listed, sank, came up, and sank again. Once more she reached the surface, but her head and neck remained submerged. She rolled over on her side languidly. Luckily we struck a sand bar, where she revived. I jerked her nose to the surface with the reins and cheered her. Then for the first time did I realize how far out we were.

I was twelve when I climbed aboard a Swedish schooner that was ready to leave the harbor. I crawled in hiding under the windlass. But it was dark before the sailors heaved the ship's hawser and hoisted the gangplank aboard. We passed the colored lights in the mouth of the harbor, and the water became rougher. The schooner plunged northward through the sea. And before we were out in Cattegat an hour the waves washed over the deck, soaking my clothes and chilling my skin.

In front of the fore-castle lay the chain hole. I stole down the stairs. There, at least, the sea did not wash over me. While I sat freezing on the rusty pile of iron links my teeth chattered in my head, and the roar of the breakers and the creaking of the ship's hull grew loud. The schooner rolled through the sea, tumbling down the steep slopes to find herself the next moment thrown up on another mountain peak. And the lumber cargo shifted to starboard and gave the schooner a pugnacious tilt. The starboard shoulder rammed against the sea doggedly.

When all hands were ordered on deck I crept out of the chain hole and groped my way to the fore-castle. How I wished to creep into a bunk and cuddle up beneath a warm blanket! But I actually feared that the sailors might throw me overboard if they found me there. A tin cup fell from a shelf and rolled back and forth on the floor. It frightened me. And I seized a pair of woolen underdrawers and ran to the chain hole. I stuck my feet into them and pulled them over my shoulders, and tied the waistband around my neck. My hands and arms were imprisoned within. I lay bumping my head against the iron links, and wished that I were home.

I was awakened by a streak of lantern light shining in my face. Two sailors, hidden in oilskin suits, leaned over me. They were frightened, and stared, one behind the other, afraid to advance

and ashamed to retreat. Finally they took courage and hauled me out of my hiding place and aft to the captain's cabin under the poop. There they left me, eyeing myself in a mirror. What a sight I made in the sailor's underwear!

The captain entered and gave a jovial grunt that shook his body. He took me over to his ship's chest, where he bent down and pulled out socks and underwear and a blue broadcloth suit. He stripped me of all my clothes and made me put on his own. I disappeared entirely in his pants. He folded them to the knee. The upper end he fastened with safety pins over my shoulders. The coat dragged on the floor.

Outside, the storm raged many days and nights. During the day I sat in the cabin looking at the sea through the porthole. At night I slept on a couch. Once when I awoke, the captain, in his oilskin suit, was bending over me. He patted my cheek and went away, chuckling. Then I felt a lump in my throat.

One glorious sight I remember on this trip. The schooner was bound for Iceland. Winds and tides led her astray, so that every hour she advanced a knot she backslid one half. On the edge of the horizon the evil gleam of an iceberg appeared and vanished. The first day the tiny speck rocked and toppled off, climbed and retreated, and at night died out. But at sunrise the speck appeared again and throughout another day of frosty clearness

threw a steel glint toward me, a glint hard and unfriendly, which throughout a third, fourth, fifth, and sixth day prodded my eyes, and each night died a scintillating death, like the sun before a total eclipse. Then, in the pitch of night, the iceberg took a leap, wild and sudden, and turned into a monster with horns that rived the clouds of heaven, and a bilging body that ploughed the depth a thousand fathoms down.

Two months later the captain put me ashore in Frederikshavn again.

The sea was calling. But my parents were against my being a sailor. My father had become a telephone worker, and was erecting poles and stringing a steel wire between the rescue stations along the dunes. He was home but once a month. My mother was still a washerwoman, and remained so until her eighth child was born. How strong and tireless they were, those two toilers! Their energy was my rich heritage. He was a quiet, practical man, sinewy and with an aristocratic face. She was of a more poetic nature, with a sound sense of humor but an unsound temper.

The children are all alive. My older brother was the image of father and I of mother. His twin sister had our grandmother's meekness. My younger brother came to possess mother's imagination and father's practical patience. My younger sister had all of mother's faults and virtues,

like myself. The sixth child was a girl with golden curls and blue, dreamy eyes, and a delicately chiseled face. She loved to dream the hours away in the front window and listen to an old soldier grinding his street organ. The seventh and the eighth child were boys. They were born after I ran away for good. The younger I saw the other day for the first time — a tall sailor lad of eighteen, on shore leave. He resembles mother, except that he has none of her temper and seems looser knit.

After my return from the Swedish schooner I worked in a tobacco shop, where I stripped leaves, crushed the stalks into snuff, and dipped chewing tobacco in black juices. Once the boss whipped me with ropes of raw chewing tobacco. I had stolen the licorice sticks that should have gone into the pot of dipping juice. And often, when I failed to separate a leaf from its stalk without tearing it, he would slap my fingers with the wooden trowel with which he rolled the chewing tobacco.

The smell of the shop reminded me of sailors and forecastles. One afternoon the shop burned to the ground. The kerosene lamps had just been lighted when one fell to the ground and exploded. In a moment the room was a blazing flame; the dry tobacco leaves and the baskets, burning like paper, blocked our escape to the staircase. The boss ran about among the children with the trowel in his hand, shouting, "Jump through the

windows!" I made a leap through a window and fell on the stone pavement below. For a moment I lay dazed. But something hard hit me in the neck, and the boss's trowel rolled down in front of me. And the whack aroused me before the roof came crashing. I caught the trowel and crawled away. The trowel was all that was saved.

I found a job at an upholsterer's shop, where I stuffed seaweed into mattress covers. I worked among several men, who varnished and shellacked the woodwork of beds and bed springs, or sewed and tacked leather covers on sofas. Often these men were drunk. When they had money, I was on the run after Akvavit. They taught me to make booze by dropping a pinch of salt into the shellac and shaking the solution. The shellac would precipitate in lumps on the bottom while a quantity of clear alcohol floated on top. This they drank. Many an afternoon I shook shellac. And when a wandering journeyman visited the shop I was especially busy. The quicker I got him drunk and asleep in the seaweed, the better for me. For it was harder work to shake a pot of shellac than to stuff seaweed into mattress covers. And the ocean was in the seaweed.

At fourteen I started to help my father on the west coast of Jutland, where the sea of Skagerrack never ceased to roar. From the northern tip of Skagen, and as far south as the German border, we erected poles and strung steel wires. The

dunes were covered with imported cactus that held down the sand, which otherwise would have destroyed the inland soil. The richer dairy farms farther south lay tilting so close to the bluffs that the sea ate its way underneath, foot by foot, and at every storm took a slice off. The peasants were forever moving their barns and huts.

Into granite castles owned by the Danish nobility, over moats and remains of drawbridges, we strung a wire; and into coöperative dairies with tall chimneys and large centrifuges; and into light-houses with steam engines and dynamos and blinding beacon mirrors; and into the inns of every fishing village, where the market trade and the local bartering took place; and into every bathing resort, where the wealthy *Københavnnerinde* idled away her summers; and into the rescue stations high on the dunes, where the lone coast patrol kept vigil day and night. The ancient and the modern we united with a tiny steel wire — my father and I.

With steel spurs on my ankles I climbed the pole and strapped myself to the top, while I fastened the wire tight on the glass insulator. But the sea was calling. Children in the yellow mail coach would wave a handkerchief. The fisher lass on her way to meet her father would wave her hand. The bather swimming in the surf would swing a brown, bejeweled arm. The daughter of a nobleman from one of the castles would smile as she

passed by on her horse. And my young eyes were open to these greetings. My heartbeat would quicken. My temples would throb. Yet a sail at sea would stir my heart more. And the toot of a distant steamer, greeting me when I swung my cap, still more. And the entrancing beauty of the sea most of all.

During the mackerel season I hired out in Bette-Fanden's cutter. Late at night we put to sea, Bette-Fanden and I, sailing north under a breeze that blew the sharp sea smell into my nostrils. We passed close under Rocky Dike and shied seaward into deeper water, where we uncoiled the nets and fastened them between a pair of hawsers, dropping these foot by foot into the sea. The one hawser, buoyed up by corks, and the other, drawn down by lead, spread the nets into a long, steep wall.

We waited for hours before we hauled the nets aboard. The silence of night was broken by the splash of mackerel upon the surface, by the cutter, creaking under the weight of fish, and by the distant shoal waters. Bette-Fanden feared the reef and leaped up at the faintest noise. He hauled the hawsers aboard and coiled them up, while I freed the fish that were caught by their gill slits in the meshes of the nets, and dropped them in the bottom of the cutter. The nets were like bundles of silk, dyed in gorgeous tints and hues. The glazed eyes of the mackerel glowed

like heaps of pearls. Their scales glittered like diamonds.

During dark nights and during moonlit nights, while we waited to heave the nets aboard, the sea was like a magic crystal that reflected not only those concrete events of my childhood that were verified by reason, but also those obscure and hidden ones that could be recognized only by the tuning fork of my feelings. There was one sea, but there were nine varieties of tides and winds to change the sea. And each of these I hooked up fantastically with persons of previous years. The sea — or perhaps it was my adolescent yearnings — produced them in vivid illusions: Hedvig, Karla, the wealthy grocer's daughter, the sailor girls on the water front, the deaconess of the mission Church, my aunts, my sisters, my only woman teacher, and my mother.

The sea was like a dead child when neither tides nor winds stirred. And its foam vanished like tears of girlhood when the breezes blew the surf seaward. When a storm chased the surges into the boulders' arms, they laughed and wept in their first love. And when the gales raced the tides from the gray clouds beyond, the breakers hoydened over the boulders, sottishly, like harlots on the ships in the harbor. The ebb tides salvaged the waves from the coast like nuns withdrawing from mundane soil. The tidal waves kedged themselves shoreward like brides eager to settle

down. And when the winds and the ebb tides scudded away together, the billows, like giddy flappers, shook their heads at love. A shoreward squall and an ebb tide would ram each other in a tilting match, till, spinsterlike, the sea would preen its own heart and hutch its desires beneath virgin wrinkles. And the storms would tug at the tidal waves, and the womb of the swell would burst, and broods of thirsty ripples would suckle the breast of the sea.

At the age of sixteen I began to live on the high seas. In the forecandle of various tramp steamers I lived — in a small room with two portholes on the hull side, eight narrow bunks spiked on to three of the walls, and a shelf on the fourth wall for tin dishes. There was no room for chairs or benches on the floor, or for any clothes on the walls. Whatever I possessed I kept in my bunk. At dawn a sunbeam stole through the porthole; shadows moved on the walls and scattered on the floor; billows were beating against the hull; bells for watches rang like far-off church bells; the steam whistle, greeting another sea tramp, sounded like distant bugle calls. At night I lay awake, gazing down into the magic depth. The edge of the bow was cleaving through the smooth surface, churning the sea foam into sizzling oil. The starry sky twinkled above; pitch darkness ahead.

And the sea was the same as at home, except there were not nine but ninety-nine varieties of tides and winds to change it. During a storm the steamer dipped its nose deep in the water, growled, and shook off the waves. And when the anger of the elements grew the steamer dived down through the swell, leaving its propellers whirring high in the air, while the old steel hull rattled from stern to bow. Sometimes the waves were like sea birds clashing against the steamer, shaking their wings over the intruder; sometimes like a flock of panting pointers, leaping over a hedge; sometimes like a pine forest in a snowstorm. And sometimes the steamer leaped through the breakers like the narrow-gauge train through the sand dunes at home, trailing clouds of white behind.

I toiled within the steep walls of the stokehold. Through the iron grates thirty feet above I caught a glimpse of the blue sky. The coal crawled out of a chute at each side like an army of black snails. The four boilers stood facing me like a wild, four-headed beast, with four red mouths swallowing the food I shoveled into them. The coal scraped against the walls as it rolled down the chute. The engine pounded behind the boilers and shook the hull. I inhaled the fumes of burnt oil, and furnace odor, coal dust, and smoke, but very little sea air. And I worked like mad down in the stokehold, raking, slicing, cleaning, feeding the hungry demon. My heart throbbed like the engine. The blood

pounded in my temples — ready, I thought, to spurt out of my head.

The stokehold is the hottest place on earth. It was too cramped down there to swing a shovel. The four-mouthed monster blew its breath upon my naked body and dried the sweat that left my pores. The steam was dropping. Each pound that the pointer of the steam gauge sank was like red-hot irons thrust through my eyes. The slag fell on the iron floor in glittering masses as I raked it out of the furnaces. It threw a stench into my nostrils, singed my body, and blinded my eyes.

I liked my comrades at sea sincerely, though their outward appearance was weak and hideous, their thoughts were gross and, on the whole, childish, and their desires were two — whiskey and brothels. Ashore they were looked upon with disgust; yet society seldom reaches the core of a stoker's nature. Many a diamond is hidden under a layer of dirt. They had developed a fair degree of artistic skill. They made pencil sketches of ships and harbors; they were musical and could play several instruments; they could orate sagas and folklore and many a Bible chapter by heart; they wrote versified love letters to the girls they left behind; they made full-rigged sailing vessels within frail medicine bottles, modeled putty into cyclonic billows, and painted with a delicate touch and patience the white froth and the greenish hue of the sea.

They took a soap bath and washed their clothes after each watch in the stokehold. It was disgraceful to turn in before washing up. And if a stoker suffered with stoker cramps and his fingers were unable to hold the sweat rag, his mate gave him the rub. Yet, despite their abhorrence of stale sweat and coal dust, there existed conditions aboard many times worse than the dirt from the stokehold. And nothing but a miracle quarantined me from the common diseases of the stokers. Daily my comrades doctored each other with quacks and kerosene, green jelly soap, and sea water.

How different they were from the healthy fishermen and the old-time sailors at home! Yet, when first I saw the naked stokers drive forward the steel monster, shoveling food into its greedy mouths while it spat coal dust and ashes and bituminous smoke into their syphilis sores, I wondered whether these wounded, modern heroes were not after all the stronger. Their bloodshot eyes and pain-drawn faces made me love them. Their swarthy bodies, with which they worked so hard to raise the pressure in the boilers, made me honor them. In their sleep they dreamed of the steel beast, roaring for more fuel. Often they had stoker cramps, often they fainted, always they worked till they dropped. Once, when I carried a fallen partner up on deck, I saw the suffering I had seen in a painting of the crucified Christ.

In Brazil a half-witted bully got aboard. The "Stoker Ghost," we called him. He did not get along with the crew, for besides being lazy he stole our tobacco, and ate the scrapings of our pipes, and chewed up the raw tea in the forecabin. And he stole my porthole bunk. Once he forced me to bleed an artery in his arm.

One day he refused to go on watch — and this is the unpardonable sin among seafaring men. He strolled on deck long after the bell rang. The Chief came forward. And the Stoker Ghost opened his pocket knife. "I would n't work for such a kid as you," he said. The Chief was small and slim, and looked as though he was unable to lift a coal shovel. I saw him jump up like a cat whose tail had been stepped upon, strike his gold-braided cap off his head, and for a moment stand with his eyes focused on the stoker. With the passion of a tiger the little Chief leaped, hitting with the momentum of his body the crown of his own head against the big face of his antagonist — in the manner of a Copenhagen Apache (*en københavnsk Bølle*). The blow was so forceful that the Stoker Ghost dropped.

The Chief circled around him in quick leaps, beating him with a piece of hose on face and arms and legs until his limbs were streaked with blood blisters like tattoo marks on a cannibal. "Lazy pirate! I'll whip your bloody carcass into jelly!" The Stoker Ghost did not utter a word; not a groan

came from his lips. And the Chief kept on lashing him until he was beaten senseless. Then we were ordered to give him a wash and throw him into his bunk. And from that day he was broken. His cheeks grew hollow, his eyes sank into his head, and his muscles dwindled away. He could hardly drag himself down into the stokehold. And he began to eat iron, filing it to powder from an iron bar and gulping it down with water. He ate but little food, and no longer took his stroll on deck between watches. He would lie in my bunk, gazing through the porthole at the flying fish skimming above the water.

One morning after his watch he moaned horribly. In the afternoon he became delirious. His body shook violently, and he tore the hair off his chest and scratched the hullside with his hard finger nails. We stood in the doorway, staring. "His face is turning black," one whispered. I took a drink of water to the sick man, spilling most of it on his throat. One dipped a sweat rag in vinegar and bathed his face. One fanned him with a piece of cardboard. One found a stray pair of overalls, rolled them into a pillow, and stuck them under his head. One poured a pinch of snuff into his nostrils. One dropped a Bible into the bunk. And the officers also tried to relieve him. His raucous breathing grated on my ears. I took his watch in the stokehold.

In the morning, as the sun rose over the horizon,

he died. We carried him up on deck, washed him, and wrapped him in canvas. And we tied a hunk of coal to his feet, the largest hunk we could find. The Chief stopped the engine. The steamer rocked on the ocean, respectfully, like an old woman in church. Silence reigned supreme. I, being the youngest of the Stoker Ghost's colleagues, and, according to the captain, "the least polluted," read the Lord's Prayer. Then we slid his body overboard. A shoal of flying fish flew over his grave. A little foam and a few murmuring bubbles — and the steamer put on full speed again.

Whenever the steamer reached its goal and the engine stood dripping with oil, hot and sweating, a sombre, churchlike silence that made us whisper hovered over the stokehold and engine room. The wind and the sea had suddenly ceased to sing; the propellers had stopped spinning; the thick steel paws of the engine had quit their trampling; and the stuffed hull of the steamer no longer groaned. The struggle of human brawn against coal and fire, steam and iron, and the struggle of these against the sea and against the winds and the tides, had ended. There was a blessed breathing pause, a Sabbath rest, a truce, in the harbor.

Already before the anchor dropped, or before the steamer was moored, a flush of excitement reigned in the forecastle. We were getting ready for shore leave, shaking roaches out of our holiday

suits, sponging off white mould spots, pressing our trousers — not with an iron, but by rolling them into a bundle and sitting on them.

If the steamer stole into harbor at early dawn, the shore leave was postponed until the engine had been groomed, and the bilges under the floor had been drained from waste oils, and the grease had been scraped off the circular staircase, and the five hundred condenser pipes and seven hundred boiler pipes had been cleaned out with long bars and brass brushes, and the cylinders and babbitt bearings and centrifugal regulator, and all the other vital organs, had been examined. We dug salt and soot out of the boilers and grease out of the bilges, and we loafed in the cool, tomblike tunnel where the propeller shaft stretched its sluggish segments from midships to the stern. We killed the day. And a childish impatience put a glow in our eyes.

In the harbor we ate twice as often as at sea — bread and coffee before seven, ham and eggs at eight, soup and steak at noon, bread and coffee at three, ham and eggs at six. Neither tough salt meat nor mouldy hard-tack, as at sea! And at every meal the peddlers were waiting for us on deck — Algerian Arabs, Alexandrian Turks, Brazilian hybrids, tattoo artists, peddlers of lascivious photographs, silk sellers, venders of fruit, soap, and tobacco, pimps, runners, tramp sailors, sailor missionaries, and an occasional Dane who

had settled down on foreign soil and who longed for a chat in his mother tongue.

When finally the engine stood sleek and shining in its stall, there was a wild scramble for the boiler passage to the stokehold, to be first at the faucet, and then to the forecandle for a shave. A sleeve of a coat or a shirt was to be patched, a rubber collar to be scrubbed, a few unruly locks of hair to be cut. A hurried bite of supper, a dash to the Chief for money, and a rush to the dory or gang-plank. Late at night my comrades returned, tumbling down the forecandle stairs, crazed by whiskey and women. They would quarrel, they would weep, they would wrestle, they would draw their knives and fight in the pitch-black darkness. A paralyzing fear would possess me as I lay in my bunk listening. In the morning I would find them on the floor in contorted heaps, with a few harmless gashes on their arms.

Once at Gibraltar I rowed ashore alone. How good it was to walk on the ground again! I could have kissed the stones I trod. Darkness set in suddenly. The streets were crowded with Spaniards, young men and smiling girls. Ragged children blocked my way, begging money and offering to show me the city. "Me show you nice bullfight." Bullfight! I had seen the butcher at home kill horses, bulls, cows, and hogs, until such sport no longer amused me. And had I wanted to see a fight I should have stayed aboard

among my drunken mates. "Me show you nice singing girls." I felt indisposed to music. During the last month we had played harmonica, accordion, flute, ocarina, horn, and violin. "Me show you nice place where sailor was robbed and killed."

A quiet place was what I longed for. I threw the last child a shilling, and the crowd fought to pull and push me through a street and up a path that was cut in the granite along the slope of the Gibraltar Rock. I sat down and looked out over the harbor. Hundreds of colored lights rocked on the anchored ships. The Milky Way was like rolling steam from a locomotive. The faithful Polaris twinkled in the clear Mediterranean night. The sky was sapphire-blue and looked as soft as sealskin. The wake of the full moon gleamed upon the water clear across to Morocco. Searchlights from the French warship at Ceuta and from the English fort above me flashed in the night sky. The searchlights looked like swords in the hands of dueling giants, the rays of light crossing the heavens and darting at each other with dazzling speed.

Guitar and mandolin music reached me from the sailor resorts below. A sailor on a ship was singing, "Goodbye, My Bluebell," but his voice was drowned by a boy singing a Spanish serenade. How good it was to lie stretched on the solid rock and watch the panorama of the harbor and the Strait of Gibraltar, and to hear the voice of the city!

On a bleak Christmas Eve — my first away from home — I stole into a church in Marseilles near the water front, where a white-haired Protestant minister led me up to the Christmas tree. His daughter served me coffee and cake. She gave me a smile which warmed my heart. And she gave me a pair of mittens which she herself had knitted — “to warm my hands at sea.” But a stoker needs no woolen mittens to warm his hands at sea. I put them away in my sailor bag. And ten years later they warmed my hands on the Minnesota University campus — warmed my hands and my heart.

One Sunday morning I wandered through a Sicilian village, up the slopes of a sulphur mountain, where the bluest sky and reddest sun, the greenest water and yellowest fields in all the world thrilled me, and where olive-skinned children with pretty eyes and teeth and soft voices danced around me — the same children who on the previous day, aboard my ship, were dumping baskets of sulphur dust into the hatches.

Once my ship left me sick in Port Antonio, Jamaica, among a hundred Hindu coolies. These slender, rib-boned men and their childwives had caught the fever during their passage from the East Indies. And when at night the wailing of these loin-girdled people grew too loud for my nerves I would wade through my ward, where they lay on the floor, and bribe the Negro nurse at the door

and the Negro attendant in the hallway. Then I would steal out of the hospital and drag myself down to the rocky coast in front of the fort, and lie cooling myself in the Caribbean Sea, not so very many miles north of Robinson Crusoe's island. My fingers would cling to a rock that jutted out of the surf, while my burning body tossed and rocked in the soft cradle.

I was drunk with fever and saw visions. The dome of heaven quavered and the stars fell like showers of glowing meteors. My fingers stroked the soft, sensuous blackness around me, and my lips pursed and puckered at the pitch of night. I shuddered at the primitive, almost violent urge of the night to draw me into a night of greater darkness. The murmurs of the surf weighted my young spirit down, like the gloom of death. And I climbed out of the water and up on the rocks to dress.

I wandered inland over the hills, into the banana and coconut groves of the Negro planters. Through a path in the tropical thicket I stumbled, over stumps and roots, while a black network of shadows threatened to ensnare me. Underbrush of cactus tore my hospital shirt. And the sound of the rending fabric magnified a thousand tears of the tissue of my heart, where two opposing feelings, love of life and fear of death, tore at each other. I pressed my cheeks hungrily against the darkness, and also my pulsating throat. I

leaned against the night, stunned by its beauty. I wept and threw my arms around the darkness. Then, drunk with fever and drunk with the desire of life, and almost in a coma, I stumbled back to the hospital and fell into the arms of my Negro nurse.

At the time I left my home for the sea I was a lad of sixteen, with wild eyes, a grotesque nose, protruding brow, and a wilderness of hair covering my ears. My eyes, nose, and brow were out of symmetry with the rest of my face, and this made me look manly yet childish, savage yet civilized, with the highbrow and lowbrow forever struggling for mastery.

When I put foot ashore in my home harbor after two years of sailing, my glorious childhood had ended. I was eighteen, and a man. The mark of the beast was on my brow. But so was the mark of the bard and the sage. Dual desires divided my heart into a sensuous delight for the sights of nature and a reverent awe for applied mechanics. And the two desires were equally strong.

My point of view was purely objective. I had outlook, and no insight. As yet only one world existed for me — the outside one. And I watched that world with an attitude, not hungry for possession, but æsthetic and intellectual. For neither my stomach nor my glands were ravenous

in their demands. My eyes, however, were, and in two different directions — toward the beautiful disharmonies of nature and toward the ugly harmonies of modern machinery. Both dazzled me. Both drew me. Both divided my heart.

The old viking spirit drove me over the seas to skim the surface of nature — a warm, romantic rover. The new scientific spirit drew me down into the heart of nature to watch its hidden forces — a cool, realistic adventurer. Both of these, the old and the new, focused my eyes on America, the land of Columbus, Leif Ericson, Indians, and romance, which I read about at sea; and the land of skyscrapers, bridges, air railroads, and realism, which I had seen on my shore leaves.

I came home to bid my parents and siblings and relatives farewell. A week later I walked into a steamship office in Copenhagen, sailor bag on shoulder and cap in hand, asking for a job across. How well I remember that morning! A hunchbacked clerk chased me into the street, where Prince Kristian came riding alone. The sight of the young, handsome Prince gave me a sudden warmth in my heart. I swung my cap in greeting. He smiled, and saluted, and three times nodded his head. To this day no one has ever saluted me save the present King of Denmark.

During the next fortnight I made a daily visit to the hunchbacked clerk; and each day he chased me into the street. Finally an older clerk, with a

skipper face, remarked: "Why the hell don't you sign him up and get rid of him?" And he did. He wrote with his left hand, I remember. I have before me my old seaman's book, where he wrote my pedigree, and, under "marks of identification," "A tattooing of an American and a Danish flag on right arm" — a red and blue design prodded into my white skin by a Baltimore Jew on my seventeenth birthday.

I boarded the liner the day before its departure, and the next morning, when the emigrants began to swarm on the dock, promenaded on deck in my new sailor uniform. From a passenger boat running between Russia and Copenhagen came a Levantine procession: old patriarchs, bright Jewesses, children leaping like lambs. Danish peasants and city people began to arrive. Up the gangplank they climbed in homespun clothes: mature men and women, husky boys with down on their chins, and young, flaxen-haired maidens.

Longshoremen were rolling trunks to the steam hoist, whence every minute a load leaped aboard like a giant grasshopper. For hours I hid among the passengers, watching the crowd below that was seeing the liner off.

At noon the Hellig Olav started on her voyage. The people on the wharf followed along, cheering and waving their hands. The liner put on full speed and was soon in the middle of the Sound. In the background I had a last glimpse of Our Lady's

Church — Admiral Nelson's best target a century before, when temporary rafts floated out to fight his stately ships. On the starboard Sweden's rocky coast rose out of the water like dark clouds. On the larboard Seeland's fertile fields waved me a last farewell. The sight of a beech forest moistened my eyes. "Thou grove of Danish beeches (*Du danske Bøgeskov*)" rang softly out over the Sound. We passed close under Kronborg Castle at Elsinore, the home of the "melancholy Dane" and of the Ghost, Holger Danske. That was the last I saw of my old country.

III

“LIFE IS ALL A VARIORUM”

I WAS a man, and stronger than most men. Yet my second childhood began the day I entered my new country. I had to learn life over in a brand-new world. And I could not talk. My first desire was for chocolate drops, and I pointed my finger at them. My second was for fishing tackle, and I pointed my finger at a wrapping cord and heaved up an imaginary fish. I used baby talk. “Price?” I asked. And, later in the day, “Vats-price?” Saleswomen answered with motherly grimaces.

I never quite got over my second childhood. I doubt that any immigrant ever does — with his hasty, often harsh attuning to the new world. My first birth was distant and dim and unreal, for I was almost three years old when I awoke, and most of the shock had disappeared. The old world and I grew up together. We just grew in blissful ignorance of one another’s growing pains. And my first childhood stole upon me softly.

Not so my second childhood. I was born full-grown, so to speak, and, therefore, was aware of

my new birth. I regressed to the greed of infancy. My curiosity was that of a child. My manners lacked the poise of adulthood. My angers, fears, and joys were fleeting and childish, and divided the new world into absolute categories — into good and evil. The new world cut into my clay and chronicled something which was not there before — another code of thoughts and feelings.

The moment I put foot ashore I dropped my sailor bag from my shoulder, awe-struck at my own puniness. For Battery Park lay like a deep valley under the towering cliffs and mountain crags of Broadway. A glance up at the columns of the Custom House and at the skyscrapers impressed me as no other world wonder could. The dome of heaven sighed over the crags and coulees like a huge seashell, and snow covered the majestic peaks of these man-made mountains.

The Atlantic blew its breath into the mouth of the harbor, straight through the Battery into the gorge of the Broadway canyon. The snow blew its beauty over the wharves and warehouses, and over the ferries. On a moored barge a woman was pulling down a line of frozen washing. Knee-deep she shivered in the snow, her arms goose-fleshed, her hands red, and the baby clothes stiff as raw-hide. Floating barges bulged with coal and steel rails, brick and ashes. A scow laden with dead horses, and another laden with scobs and foundry slag, floated by. Tugboats, with their smoke tails

kinked and twisted by the wind, nosed their prows into the bulging hull of a "sea hog," rooting at the freighter like pigs taking suckle. Churning propellers hacked and prows of steamers clove through ice floes and snow broth.

And far above, the skyscrapers rose like cathedrals of alabaster, gleaming in the sun — Manhattan, the city of my second childhood.

I found shelter in Mill's Hotel — a slender skyscraper on Bleeker Street, where I occupied a cell with a shelf to sleep on and a rope strung up for clothes. There I rested myself the first night, already quite detached from the past, and stunned with a crazy feeling that I was somebody else.

At early dawn I was out on the street again to gaze at the buildings, one of which was large enough to house the people of my home town, and at Brooklyn Bridge, which was thrice as broad as the King's Highway running through Denmark, and at the trains above my head and under my feet that were ten times speedier than the narrow-gauge train of the dunes.

Frantic streams of sweatshop workers climbed the subway stairs, leaped out of street cars, poured forth from ferries, rushed down from elevated stations. Children carried box wood home from wholesale stores and market places. Bent old men carted bulky sacks of rags to their junk shops. Sailor tramps told doleful stories of shipwrecks in which they had lost their belongings, from the

gold they had dug in Alaska to their mother's Bible. Years later I found one of the same tramps on the same spot, telling the same tale. But only the first time did I urge him to accept a loan.

On West Street tangled teams and trucks and peddlers' carts blocked the horse cars that clanged their bells with yowling petulance, while teamsters cursed, peddlers sang, ferries tooted. On one side of the street rows on rows of immigrant liners lay moored. On the other side old tilting rooming houses were crowded with dark-eyed children, and with women with Mona Lisa faces, and with men lamenting in strange tongues.

Labor bureaus shipped away immigrants to mines and mills and factories. The labor market was flooded. Weeping with gratitude they went. Every day brought fresh hordes ashore. For every man who found work a hundred others stepped ashore from the Ellis Island ferry.

I descended into a subway excavation, far beneath the traffic, where laborers ran in continuous gallop, balancing their wheelbarrows on narrow planks, and throwing mud and granite into steam shovels. When a man stumbled or rested to regain his breath, his foreman's curses reverberated against the walls. My ambition was to build a subway. But foremen drove me away from their gangs of toilers, watchmen threatened me with arrest, explosives endangered my life.

My next ambition — and one that is not yet dead — was to drive an elevated train. But where could I find the owner? I rode to the end of the lines and stepped off at every station to find the owner. I pestered passengers, ticket-takers, conductors, and the men that repaired the tracks. But never did I find the owner.

Along thirty miles of water front I wandered in search of work, — around Manhattan Island, on the Brooklyn, Jersey City, Hoboken, and Staten Island wharves, — waiting through rain and sleet and snow with gangs of longshoremen to reach the boss before he finished picking the men he wanted. It took strength, when a steamer arrived, to break the brawny barriers and stem the tides of human muscles. Strong men crushed each other to the ground in their passion for work.

Thirty hours these longshoremen worked without a rest, while thousands of envious idlers watched from ashore. Their eyes were wild with lust for work. Tobacco juice mingled with sweat from their brows and froze into icicles on their horned moustaches. Cargoes of wheat and fruit, coal and brick, boxes, bales, and barrels, these tireless toilers carried, while their gang boss, yelling like a demon, drove them in a continual trot.

Accidents they ignored in their great urge for work. The paw of a hoisting boom struck a toiler to instant death; a cable swept a row of men off the deck, down on the drifting ice floes; a scaf-

fold gave way under a dozen men, who tumbled down with their barrels in a bleeding heap.

On my arrival I was in possession of a twenty-dollar gold piece, five silver dollars, a pocket Bible, and a good watch. My sailor bag was full of working clothes. A six-shooter and a Spanish pistol, which I had bought in Buenos Aires the previous year, and a linen shirt which I had worn at the age of one, lay hidden on top among a dozen handkerchiefs. The next day sailor tramps borrowed my gold piece. And when the rest of my money was spent I took refuge in the open, cuddling up in a pile of straw that kept the cement from freezing on the foundation of a new skyscraper. There my sailor bag was stolen the first night. My baby shirt I saved, finding it in my pocket the next morning. I had mistaken it for a handkerchief.

One evening, as I cuddled up in the straw pile, an old Norseman — of the Amundsen type — lay down beside me. He swore at the aftertaste of the free-lunch bologna on which the saloons kept us alive. "I may as well join the navy again, instead of starving to death," he grumbled. At the mention of the navy my heart began to pound.

"Could a fellow who can't speak English join the navy?" I asked. I knew but a few curses and vulgar phrases that I had learned at sea.

"Anybody can," he answered. "The officer

asks if you speak English, and you answer back that you can't, but you understand everything."

I lay awake most of the night, repeating the answer, "I speak not much English, but I understand (yoonderstand) everything." At dawn I was walking back and forth in front of a sign upon which was printed the picture of a handsome sailor and beneath, in bold type, "Young Men Wanted for the United States Navy." Several hours I waited before the office opened. A sailor was sweeping the room. A stern-looking officer in uniform was sitting at a desk. He eyed me while I was busy whispering the answer to myself, my heart tugging fiercely.

"How old are you?" he asked. I knew at once that something was wrong.

"I — I speak not much English, but I understand everything."

The officer repeated the question in a louder tone: "How old are you?" And I repeated my answer, also in a louder tone: "I speak not much English, but I understand everything."

Then a flush of impatience darkened his face. He waved me out of the office, while the sailor grinned.

When a watchman drove me away from the straw pile, I took refuge in a Bowery hotel, where I was packed on the floor with other vagrants like herrings in a barrel. These were dime and nickel lodgings, and we lay sleeping, not only on floors

and benches, but also in the halls and on the stairs, from roof to sidewalk. My watch I pawned for fifty cents. Many a night I was grateful to sleep on the stairs among drunken Bowery bums. We lay or sat intermingled in a solid mass that formed a large, sluggish organism with limbs stretching into every nook, whose breath was strong, and whose coughs and grunts, moans, and snoring, were the weirdest music that ever touched my ear.

At dawn we disentangled ourselves from one another's grip. And weaklings, who during the night succumbed, were shipped to the morgue and to the potter's field—two places I followed friends to that first winter.

The Bowery hotels welcomed me, whether I had my nickel or no. They saved me from freezing to death. Why should I not be grateful? Yet they were like slave ships with cargoes of slaves sealed up under the hatches.

And there were other wonders on the Bowery: the daily bread line with its soup, the Bowery Mission with its midnight teas, and the saloon free-lunch counters—traps with cheese, where many a hungry rat was fed.

In the Bowery saloons the air was so strong from smoke and alcohol that I groped my way along the walls like a blind man, colliding against human beings who had hardly enough life left to stagger out and beg for another dime. I found mad orators, pouring forth their feelings to moping

men. I met boys of many nationalities, engaged in petty stealing, boasting of their last police adventure. I saw the vile pander of the brothels and the effeminate pervert of the parks — two male types that made me shiver. And here I found the harlot in the last ditch — a stranded wreck of a woman.

I joined the bread line on the Bowery, which wound around the block, and diminished, when the soup was served, like a roll of wire chopped off into nails. Shabby were the men, gloomy their spirits. Like homeless dogs they were, skulking around for bones in back alleys, snapping and snarling if I stepped on their toes or squeezed them out of line.

At the Bowery Mission the pastor and his wife fed a strange family. I became a frequent visitor there, and among ex-convicts, drunkards, dope fiends, and not infrequently demented youths, testified in baby English about a benevolent Providence. We bragged about our sins, especially on Saturday nights, when wealthy American women went slumming. Here the blackest sinner was the hero.

The one person who gave me the heartiest welcome to the shores of my new country was a woman bartender, in a saloon near South Ferry. God bless her memory. The ferry and tugboat crews who frequented the place informed me that in her youth she had been queen among the sailors

in the Red Hook district across the river. Although she was vulgar and seldom sober, she took a maternal liking to me from the moment I sauntered into the saloon, boiling me eggs and a pot of coffee, sending me to a Turkish barber shop in the neighborhood to get my clothes fumigated and my body steamed. She tucked me into bed in a hall room above the saloon and poured a bowl of burning "medicine" into my throat. And for six weeks, while she was bartender and free-lunch cook, she nursed me back to health. Spring found me strong and full of hope, ready to tackle a' job.

I worked on a tugboat and lived ashore at night. On Hamilton Avenue in the Red Hook district I lived. There women greeted me from hallways and gay sailor saloons, and from the curtained windows above. One night a man dragged me inside a brothel. A wrinkled, greedy-looking creature — the procuress — sat in a corner of the reception parlor, puling at her rheumatism. There were five young immigrant girls with her. They were all Scandinavians, tall and stolid, clumsy and mechanical in their charms. The youngest one had an eye unhealed from a stab by a sailor's knife — a jellied film of an eye. I shuddered at the sight and forced my way out. But the procuress limped after me. She had a virgin hidden away in the attic, she told me — one fresh from Norway. I rushed away from the evil woman.

I was lonesome and drifted into sailor resorts on Columbia Street. Many "joints" there were filled with girls, children almost, shockingly brave, stooping to all the tricks of seduction. I feared the bewitching creatures and was in a panic when I saw one coming toward my table. Young Jewesses and daughters of Italian immigrants sat down uninvited on my lap and wound their arms around my neck. They looked as innocent as my sisters in the old country. I patted their hands and fled.

I lived with a shipmate above a saloon across the way from the police station. Thérèse was young and slender, like Queen Esther, whom I remembered from a forty-pound illustrated Bible that I had bought from a book agent. She was my mate's sweetheart — a bird of passage. And often she entered our room in the dark of night as calmly as though she were taking her bath, bargaining and gesturing. Me she hit a hard blow with her fist. "Dumb-bell!" she whispered, with furious scorn.

I found a sailor mission in the Red Hook district, organized by a strong Norwegian preacher who kept his countrymen active in the useful work of saving sailors' souls. His followers were a healthy group of immigrants and not like the wrecks on the Bowery. On Saturday night the preacher held open-air meetings among harlots and drunken sailors. I was attracted by the

preacher's magnetic face and by his megaphone voice. This earliest social centre — the Bethel Ship Mission — established me ashore. I should probably have drifted to sea had I not found it. The men who attended the sailor mission were strong dock laborers, and the women were robust servant girls.

I grew earnest about religion, as young men do when they are lonesome. Physically I was very strong — and, for æsthetic rather than ethical reasons, continent, as well. America fascinated my flesh. Every fresh stimulus took hold. My urge for self-destruction was as strong as my urge for self-preservation. Yet my senses were too sharp for "trenchant living." My comrades lived ten times more thoroughly than did I, and therefore died before they grew up to tell.

It was not "salvation" that I wanted so much as to know God personally. It was Jehovah, not Jesus, that I desired. I was not fleeing away. The new world and I were growing accustomed to one another. And, though I compromised daily, I was able to hold my own without losing my dignity. I was, therefore, not trying an escape, and sought, rather, a youthful adventure into a still newer world. But Jehovah ignored me. I did not come anywhere near that spiritual Kingdom which the sailors bragged about. Jehovah was out there, somewhere. And He simply ignored me.

I tried prayers — verbal and written — and kept a sharp lookout. In my pocket Bible I wrote versified incantations from Genesis to the book of Revelation, until the book was worn out. I still treasure its remains.

I tried "good works." Many a sailor tramp paid for my failure as a saint. I wandered up and down Hamilton Avenue, picking them up and dragging them to the mission. And if the tramp was too dirty for presentation I led him down into a cellar and washed his face.

I tried fanaticism and became a nuisance to the sailor preacher. Then I drifted over to other missions that abounded in the Red Hook district, to the Holy Rollers, Full-Gospel People, Tongue-Speakers — queer groups of sturdy Scandinavian immigrants who, unlike myself, were fleeing away from the new world.

During the meeting they fell in heaps on the floor, shrieking out prayers hysterically and rocking their bodies like Negroes in a Southern Gospel camp. And they were hard-working men and women — longshoremen, dock carpenters, and servant girls. They spoke with "tongues," uttering frightful sounds and noises. They "interpreted" these "tongues" with holy awe. They "prophesied" about wars and shipwrecks to a startled sailor audience. They "healed" their sick by touch. One — an old Swedish janitor — claimed that he had raised a child from death.

But Jehovah paid not the slightest attention to me, no matter how wild my efforts. I made it a coöperative task for these endowed Scandinavians to give me a lift. In vain they put their hands on my head, and shouted imploringly, and poured "three-in-one" oil down my neck. Finally they consoled me by quoting Saint Paul: "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" In the gray hours of morning I left them for my tugboat in the harbor.

I hoarded words like a coin-collector, and the language of my second childhood grew. Every day I found new words; for all the things and acts that I beheld in the new world had a name, and every name had many modifiers. I talked to myself as I had done in the rope spinnery during my first childhood — playing with my collection during all my leisure hours. I remember distinctly the day when four words which had grown familiar to my ear attached themselves to things that had grown familiar to my eye. "Was the boss *satisfied*?" "This is a *rush* job." "The whistle blew *long ago*." "I'll O. K. your time slip." I was less of a child and more grown-up when these four words became part of my own living flesh. We had become partners, the new world and I, for we owned something in common.

My childish responses to the new world uttered themselves in my emotions. A bartender, giving me a plate of corned beef and cabbage, filled my heart with a rare joy. A park cop, poking my ribs with his club, made me angry enough to kill. A watchman, pointing his gun at me, gave me a fear that, literally, tasted salty. (Lot's wife must have had even a greater fear.) The new world, with its new words and new feelings, grew into a corporation — like the Trinity, almost. First in rank came the new world; second, the new words — which were only symbols and were a kind of “substituting vicar”; third, the new feelings — which were like a “spirit” that revealed and appraised its two triumviral peers, a sort of guardian ghost that told me the difference between good and evil. For the new world was neither all good nor all evil. I worshiped it with the faith of a child — that is, selfishly.

In Brooklyn I joined a public night school, where immigrants gathered to learn the language of their new country. The teacher was a young American woman of wit and refinement. She handled her forty husky pupils well. There was in the class an old, half-blind Italian doctor, who never learned to say “I” instead of “me.” There was also an English teamster, with black teeth and clothes that smelled of horses, who was learning a more limber handwriting. And there were many Swedes, who after the day's work at the water

front were tired and sleepy, and always lost the page in their primers when they were called on to read. A German would leap up like a Jack-in-the-box to show them the page and paragraph.

We read the very same fairy tales which in my childhood had bored me. Danish fairy tales, strange to say, had always made me sick at my stomach — especially "The Ugly Duckling." Perhaps I had been too sensuous for such kind of symbolism, though the parables of Jesus always affected me pleasantly. But in the night school here I found the charm of Andersen. The words melted in my mouth like liquored candy. And when the teacher read a phrase I beheld a familiar Danish landscape — in colors — inside my eyelids.

We were proud of our teacher and we were all in love with her — even the charming old doctor, whose office boy often came into the classroom between bells, rushing him off to a sick bed. The teacher accepted my offer to escort her home after the late school hours. And when the Britisher heard this he grinned equivocally. "I s'pose ye 're goin' to marry 'er next, for to 'ave a wife to support ye?" How wisely the other immigrants smiled! They would gossip, though not maliciously, and they would lower their voices when I entered the classroom.

Once I overheard the Britisher say: "Sure, 'e is a sailorman, 'e is. And 'e 'as a gurrel in h'ivery 'arbor."

One night she invited me to a Sunday dinner at her home. She wanted me to meet her husband. Her husband! Was she married? Surely she was married. She even had a little boy, whom her husband took care of while she taught night school. She laughed teasingly. She supposed that I was "through" escorting her home? Certainly not, I told her. It would be an even greater pleasure. Why a greater pleasure? — not quite so teasingly. I grew confused and jabbered a platitude about "burning love" versus "unending friendship."

This visit was my *début* into an American home. She came to the door herself and with girlish gaiety pushed me into the parlor, where her husband was crawling on the floor, playing with the baby. "Here is my prodigy, hubby." She whistled a charming falsetto and ran into the kitchen. My teacher's husband was talkative, but I understood little of what he was saying. Later he laid the baby on my lap — what finer sign of hospitality could he have expressed? — while he helped his wife in the kitchen. I side-glanced awkwardly at the little fellow — a new American too. So this was my teacher's own flesh and blood! The baby eyed me, then welcomed me vigorously by taking hold of my hair.

At school the Britisher sat writing and panting and grinning. When I told him that the teacher was a married woman he opened his eyes wide and

gasped: "Look out, my friend! 'Er man 'll kill ye yet." And the other immigrants tittered and poked each other in the ribs.

When the tugboat on which I worked was sold to a San Francisco firm, I was offered a chance to stoke her around Cape Horn, a great temptation to which I almost yielded. I found work in a parochial hospital, orphanage, and old people's home. And my duties were various, such as carrying patients from the wards to the private morgue, pushing old people around the yard in a wheel chair, and keeping an eye on scores of orphans, who during their class recess flocked around me like a brood of chickens. They would close in on me, these motherless ones, in the woodshed, while I chopped wood for the laundry, and risk a scratch from the chips, begging for another sailor story. They would follow me down to the furnace, where I helped the red-haired engineer hoist ashes, and to the stables, where I gave the consumptive ambulance driver a hand, and to the laundry, where I turned the mangle for an Irish laundress. And they would enter my room, which I shared with an old saint, the chapel organist, to take a peek into my forty-pound Bible.

Often when the little ones in the middle of their play caught sight of me they came trotting across the grounds. From day to day our friendship grew. The Father in charge looked on gravely from his office window. And the young internes

and nurses flocked to the ward windows, while the good nuns, much disturbed, came mincing to gather up their charges. The Father sent me down into the cellars, which were like dark, enormous dungeons of a monastery, to sweep up thirty years of dust, while the orphans called in vain. Then one day I was discharged — “for the good of the service.”

Between Manhattan and Blackwell's Island a bridge leaps across the East River and continues high above the massive jail buildings to Long Island City. On this bridge I balanced myself on a narrow plank, painting the underneath parts of the structure, and smearing barrels of red lead on rivets and steel beams. The other daubers were young and tough, and always half drunk. I worked too fast to suit them. And I was singled out because I received a quarter more a day than they. The gang boss, who had hired me especially for this job, shook his head and whispered: “Look out for trouble, you sailor. Don't get them sore. They're a tough bunch, and they'll push anybody off — accidentally, you know.”

I was not brave with such a gang of boys over my head. And I did not know how to handle them. If I offered to chip in for a can of beer, they called me a “damned scab”, a word that I was unable to find in my pocket dictionary. And if I ignored them my snobbishness irritated them. I had been in ships where one man was the target

of the whole crew, yet no one had ever threatened his life. I knew that peace at any price was the cheapest. Either I must leave the job and run ashore like a presaging ship rat, or I must take my chances among the drunken desperadoes. I decided to quit.

But the same afternoon a foot struck my face a blow from above. The fight lasted but a minute. The boy was not quite quick enough to draw his foot away. I caught hold, and he came tumbling down upon the plank that swung in the ropes. I held on to his neck with one arm while I clung to the plank with the other, determined, if I fell, to have him follow. Others above battered my face. But I shielded it behind my opponent's head, yelling for help, as a man with death in his throat, until the gang boss intervened and saved our lives. "I told you so," he said, as he paid me off.

A week later I met the Britisher of the night school, driving a coal wagon. "Good God!" he exclaimed. "I thought ye was dead. I thought 'er man 'ad killed ye. But did n't 'e give ye an awful boxing, though?"

One morning a group of men crowded the sidewalk outside a factory, focusing their eyes on the closed gate with dog-like patience. An employment clerk appeared and picked out three men at random. And I was one of the fortunates. He handed each a pass for night work. At dusk

I approached the factory among large crowds. A whistle sounded, and men and women began to run as though they feared to be left out of Heaven. When I arrived the gate was shut. And the watchman — a jovial fellow, this one, with a badge on his chest and a club in his hand — advised me to return at midnight.

I sat down outside the factory gate and waited until he opened it again. He led me into an oozing, overheated building of ovens, benches, and small slicing machines. Men were making cylindrical phonograph records, dipping gold moulds into black wax that boiled in tanks over blue gas flames, and slicing the frail castings at the edge before the wax hardened. Women worked in the storerooms.

I worked with a crew of four — the dipper, slicer, inspector, and mould-carrier. And we earned a quarter each for one hundred perfect records, and paid a fine of a quarter each when a gold mould was scratched by accident and had to be recast. That was fair enough, I thought. I was the mould-carrier, and during a ten-hour shift walked a distance of nineteen miles between the dipper and inspector. The blue gas flames and the smoke from the wax ovens were like a million smoky candles. Half-naked men slid along the waxy floors like haunted ghosts. Vivid as the picture was, it resembled Hell — that Hell I later grew acquainted with through Dante and Milton.

The gold moulds — embossed on the inner edge by inverted titles — were protected by thick, water-cooled layers of copper. "Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht," was the mould at our oven. I read the title many times and peered through the wax smoke at the toilers leaning over their ovens, flitting back and forth between the benches and ovens, and slicing off the edge of the records like black bologna. I chuckled at the irony. Yet, often the lights and shades held me breathless.

In the bins "Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht" piled up, until close on to Christmas — as I had anticipated — the crew was laid off. I spent my first Christmas Eve in the new world wandering through wealthy residential districts, looking in at the family gatherings, and hearing phonographs in the homes sing out the sombre melody, "Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht." My eyes blinked. I *was* a child.

I was learning a trade. Eagerly I harried another unknown territory in the new world. It was always an outward voyage — a flight away from myself. And although I failed to find the Holy Grail until after I returned to myself, years later, these quests of a strong, impetuous, lonesome child-man made life more than worth living. I was learning a trade. Is there anything more salubrious for the body than to have its ten fingers do its thinking?

Voltage and amperage were the mystery of the age. What else, therefore, should I choose than the trade of an electrician? I was a humble helper, cleaning motors in hundreds of sweatshops of lower Manhattan, hauling new motors from the repair shop, and carrying burned-out armatures back to Prince Street. Even after I had learned the rudimentary tricks of this semi-mystical trade — such as the methodical waste of time and material on repair jobs, and the short cuts of contract jobs — new wonders continued to thrill me.

I beheld the interior of Manhattan — flour lofts with sparkling, high-tensioned ozonators that bleached white flour still whiter; power stations with dynamos that blew the breath of life into the new world; factories with steam hammers that shook the ground as they flattened ingots into bars, and yet were sensitive enough to cork a bottle.

I knew the cellars and roofs, the shops and offices — the machinery and vital organs of a great city. I all but drowned in a roof tank while I was wiring a pump switch, losing my balance, and keeping afloat in nine feet of water. Once I got drenched to the waist in a grocery cellar by falling into a pickle barrel. In a roomy refrigerator I was once locked up the night long. Out of a flooded cellar on the East Side I helped drag a dead fireman during a fire. Once when an Italian butcher was too generous with his wine I fell off my ladder and

was caught, dangling on a hook between two butchered steers.

And not only the shops and stores and factories did my wondering child eyes behold. Coney Island's Loop-the-Loop I kept "gorgeously bedizened." Chandeliers I hung in spacious halls to illumine the mural decorations there. An intricate signal system I helped to install in a skyscraper hotel. A millionaire's estate at Long Branch I connected with private telephones. The arches of a Gothic church I strung with conduit. My hand controlled the stage lights of a Harlem club, amused by naked dancing girls.

But the part of Manhattan that I learned to know best was after all the sweatshop district. Between Canal Street and Greenwich Village I worked in several hundred shops: glove shops with rows on rows of sewing machines, and purring shuttles gliding out of and into thread loops, and the mad dance of glinting needles around a thousand tiny leather fingers; lace shops with looms growling appallingly, gears and pinions gnawing one another's teeth, spindles and spools whirring, and shrieks from a jungle of belts; trouser shops with forty layers of cloth cut by a pair of creeping scissors, and long, clattering needle races along the inseams; handbag shops with dies, punches, and curved knives, bronze, silver, and gold hinges, and a cargo of warty alligator skins; feather shops with cellars of vats and blowers, airy drying lofts,

and downy assortment rooms — all the shops crowded with bright-eyed immigrant girls.

And there were the rag shops on Hudson and Water Streets, where old, hawklike witches squatted on the floor and examined the rags and ripped them apart — piece by piece — and with clairvoyant gazes read a story in each. The rags of Manhattan went into the right baskets — silk and wool, cotton and linen, plush, serge, and broad-cloth rags.

There were also shops with old, old men, stitching fur caps by day and sleeping on their sewing tables at night — red-eyed, undernourished dreamers, some of whom seldom, if ever, ventured down into the street, except on the Sabbath day.

And I found an artistic hat shop, owned and managed by a bearded Talmudic scholar. There was no rush in this shop; young girls had time to steal a glance at me and I at them, the air was cooled by exhaust fans, and there was a cozy, tranquil atmosphere, as though I had entered a temple. Etchings and epigrams decorated the walls. The boss was like a peaceful prophet, pouring forth wisdom and holiness. Even the motors, unlike the whizzing overworked ones in other shops, hummed harmoniously, and pulled the belts with ease.

One day I came upon a man bent over a sewing machine in a dingy sweatshop, a pale, thinly bearded Jew with the melancholy glow of his

race burning in his eye. He had suffered his share in this life, having been driven from Moscow into the Siberian ice, during his student days, from whence he had made his escape to America. At noon we lunched together at a sidewalk counter, devouring — and relishing — a glass of synthetic lemonade and a nickel's worth of doughnuts. I treated to ice-cream cones, though this extravagance was more severe on my resources than if, during my sailor days, I had treated a crew. My apprentice wage of a dollar a day barely covered the four essentials of Manhattan — carfare, clothes, housing, food.

My new friend was in a hurry to return. He was tutoring a youngster in mathematics, he told me. I held him back. Mathematics! The only language that made natural forces obey its command! The bridge between earth and the stars! The essence of voltage and amperage! He was preparing a youth for entrance examination to Cooper Union on the Bowery. "If I took lessons, could I also enter Cooper Union?" I asked eagerly. "One dollar I'll pay you every week." He looked me over from head to foot — especially my head. "Yes," he said. "I'll teach you."

That spring and summer I studied algebra and geometry with exuberant joy and tenacity. My books were always with me. In the morning on the trains from Brooklyn I studied mathematics. And when I walked along Broadway from City

Hall to the shop on Prince Street I solved quadratic equations, often colliding with people on the crowded sidewalk. When I hauled a motor to a sweatshop and the wagon got stuck in a tie-up, I would ponder over circles and triangles. When my foreman forbade me to hurry a repair job, and kept me loafing for days at a time in the cellars of Manhattan, my book was under a plumber's candle, ready at a moment's notice to be tossed into my tool bag. Even when I rode on top of an office elevator the day long, repairing the bell-wire cable between stops, my book lay hidden in my tool bag. And the diagrams I drew in my notebook were not of the broken-down bell system, but were geometric demonstrations.

Short circuits blew my screwdriver into molten drippings, my pliers into clouds of smoke, and my wrench into meteoric dust. Invisible currents swept through my tissue, some gripping me with ecstatic thrills, some taking hold as a surge seizes a ship, and some hitting me a hammer blow that stunned my senses. But I mastered my trade and my mathematics.

What a glorious second childhood !

IV

MY AMERICAN WIFE

BEFORE our college days Margaret brought me up along with the children. I have before me a picture of our oldest, among twenty-one other American boys and girls — strains of fifteen nations and a dozen creeds and races in a Manhattan schoolroom. Indian, Negro, and Turkish offspring happen to be in the group; likewise remnants of four ancient cultures: Hindu, Jewish, Christian, Moslem. For years these twenty-two American children have been moulded there. Their social growth has been so gradual that they are unaware of ever having been brought up. And, despite their vastly varied background, they have melted into a national type unknowingly. But I was *aware* — though there was no tempest in the melting pot — when that boy of mine in the picture was being brought up; and more so, even, when I myself was. For I was of age when my social growth suddenly started.

For twenty years I had been alone, a self-sufficient child and youth, hiding myself among mature men, never confiding in anybody, and,

therefore, never getting quite hatched, socially. I was mulish when others led me. For I was a leader — not a leader of others, but of myself.

The warm contacts of childhood and adolescence I never knew. My years at child labor in Denmark were secluded, though not at all tedious. I was always capable of entertaining myself: by watching my fingers make and break things; by letting my senses — they were animal in purity — snatch whiffs of beauty out of mother earth; by talking to myself.

My years at sea I also lived alone: in the stokehold, fighting the fires; in the forecastle, reading the Bible and a thousand novels; on shore leave, sight-seeing. I liked my own company immensely, and lived aloof. Yet I was not a snob or a sissy. In tropical gales I was sensuous, or when I watched the galloping paws of the engine. My mates had other tastes. Twice they joshed me; and on these two occasions I was "sociable" in the manner of a sailor. For both times I made a wager — and both times I won — that I could drink any of them under the table. After the first spree — that took place at a coal pier in Baltimore before I was seventeen — I even leaped overboard for a swim. Baltimore beer was the first medium, and Jamaica rum the second. To be frank, I lost my dignity after the second spree by poking my head through too small a porthole — "to watch a shark," I told the stokers later — and

finding myself thoroughly trapped. The "sociable" ones of the crew did their best, hauling at my legs, before the Chief came to my rescue with chisel and hacksaw.

My child life in the new world was dizzy with wonders — a full and fast and friendless life. I learned to speak American, and I learned to earn a living. But no kin shared my hopes; no friends could I confide in; no homes sheltered me; nobody recognized me. I was alone like Adam and Crusoe — on an isle of three million people.

But I was not lonesome. I loved myself too well for that, though my point of view was not toward my own image — that came later as one of the means of finding myself. I cannot remember many Narcissus delights. But how I did love a chat with myself! My tongue and eyes were my pals. They entertained me.

I was so self-sufficient that my love of life even made me shun sleep. Sleep was dank death; for I never dreamed. That also came later. I lay awake, purposely, far into the night, for the sublime joy of living an extra hour. In the dark I saw too much and too little. My eyes stroked the inner walls of their lids and sockets with various speeds and curves and pressures, etching a hieroglyphic shorthand — my private history — into the tissue.

My tongue was like a revivalist, stretching a sleek body forward and recoiling; stamping on the

floor, and hammering on the pulpit; running from wall to wall, and from platform to door; leaping clear to the roof in ecstatic frenzy. It was a revival that lifted me out of languorous sleep and back to things my eyes etched into their lids and sockets — almost as in my first bed in the room above the maker of wooden shoes. I dozed off to death when I kept those eyes of mine steady, and also when I opened the lids in the dark. For then the world vanished. My eyes could no longer “feel.” Where, then, was I?

Alone, a society of one, I climbed the tree of knowledge, straddling on its branches. At Cooper Union applied as well as pure science allured me. And art also. When I beheld an artist make drypoint etchings, my fingers itched to dig their own story into copper. My fingers also itched to revive dead dynamos, and likewise to juggle symbols of electrical theorems.

Yet a prime problem always faced me — to keep myself alive. I climbed alone, a blank asocial animal-man, willing to eat and to love in such a manner that neither I myself nor my neighbor objected. That is to say, willing to curb an eternal hunger spark within, so that it devoured neither my neighbor nor myself. I must eat or die; I must love or die — but socially.

First, food became the medium between myself and society; later, love. I spent all I earned, but no more. Here is my weekly budget: —

Seven breakfasts — raw eggs, bread, bananas	\$.70
Six lunches — doughnuts, lemonade	.36
Sunday dinner — soup, hash, ice cream	.20
Seven suppers — similar to breakfasts	.70
Furnished room	1.50
Carfare	.60
Tutoring in mathematics	1.00
	\$5.06

The remaining ninety-four cents I saved, until I could buy myself a six-dollar suit, a thirty-nine-cent shirt, a pair of heelless sneakers, and my first straw hat. I had always money to spare for a weekly beer and a solid free lunch, and sometimes even a nickel for church. I darned my own socks, soled my own shoes, cut my own hair, and did my own laundry. But, though I looked quite sociable, I was alone.

Then I found Margaret. Never before had I known of such ideal companionship, nor what vast horizons love could reach. I found another world, the world of love. Men and women became new species. I myself did. Herd habits took root in my primitive heart and sprouted vigorously. They took me by surprise, first as a vague encroachment, then as a blurring fungus growth, on my sharply focused senses, then as a merging of my tongue and eyes with the rest of myself, and finally as a merging of myself with society. There was no longer a cleavage. I lost my tongue and eyes. My own private language is almost

dead. The *whole* of me began to talk — and not only to myself, but to others. I metamorphosed with blinding speed, so that momentum threw me beyond the line. Perhaps it oversocialized me. Compassion almost hurled me out on a tangent.

I climbed down to the ground to live my love life. A desirable fall it was — a fall to social comfort like that of all ancestral apes. On the ground the world was less branched, and my curiosity less divided, and my quest more intense. There I grew in a world of two, and later in a larger world of love, until my ego merged with the national ego.

She had learned to speak her native language well, while she worked as housemaid at the age of fourteen. It was her cultured tongue that I loved first. Later, — at college, — as we romped through the fields and forests of Minnesota, I often marveled at her ease among learned professors. Even George Vincent, our “Prexy,” and his hospitable wife, on two memorable Christmas Eves, delighted in conversing with her. And she chummed with the wives of two deans. How I admired these quiet, kind, cultured Americans!

But I also fell in love with her teeth, and with her tiny hands, and with her fleet foot. She still wins the picnic races. Children worshiped her at first sight. She was fawnlike — something of a Minnehaha in form and spirit. Her laughter had

a rare, joyous quality. Her eyes were sympathetic, with a tinge of sadness in them. The loss of "the dearest of fathers," more even than the burden put on her young shoulders thereby, gave her an understanding heart, and made her eyes and voice soothing. She brightened the boarding house from basement to garret. And her charm lasted.

When I began to earn my living here in the new world, I first lived among sailors in cheap rooming houses above the saloons near the Red Hook water front, where whispers about boys being "shanghaied" often reached my ear, and where my eyes beheld the stokers on incoming steamers being plundered by runners. Later I invaded the streets that skirted Columbia Heights, and shared a parlor with many a lodger, once with a child of a crowded Polish family. These were the castaway homes of wealthy Americans — brownstone parlor-and-basement houses with high frescoed ceilings, Baltimore heaters, and porcelain lavatories.

In one of these I rented a garret from Margaret's mother. And it was a garret worth describing in detail, for there I first beheld my wife-to-be. Words fail to picture its charm. A long table straddled across the trapdoor above the garret stairs. I had to crawl to get into my garret. At the rear gable two chimneys, warm and blushing, met at the roof — just the nook for my

parrots, which an old stoker mate had brought from Brazil. There they lived between the chimneys, climbing a heavy wire mesh which I nailed up in front, Adam praying Spanish, and Eve swearing Danish, and both singing "In the shade of the old chim-mi-ney."

On the floor, on a burlap carpet, the two best books in the world — my illustrated Bible and its mate, Webster's unabridged dictionary — leaned on each other. A pair of quaint rockers, done in black and orange, stood at the ends of the table, which was covered with wool-embroidered burlap, upon which flickered a red candle, stuck into a benedictine bottle. On a collar beam above, and directly under a skylight, hung a brass chandelier, with two tiny blue, beady, gas flames burning.

From gable to gable ran two rows of prim queen-posts, yoked above by collar beams and steadied below by struts, and meeting the rafters half-way up the roof. Shelves with yards and yards of ownerless books filled the spaces between these queen-posts and formed the sides of my garret. Along the top of the shelves a white yacht raced a tarred two-masted schooner; and an alabaster Apollo chased Daphne within my first baby shirt; and the purple hose of a Turkish pipe embraced a copper jardinière brimful of dry tobacco leaves; and the broad shoulders of a jug of "Guinea Red" carried a spherical tumbler turned upside down.

Stuck into a crack on one of the shelves was a

blue-and-white porcelain shard — perhaps a part of a broken platter — depicting, if I remember right, two lovers fleeing in a boat on the river; and over their heads two birds, stealing kisses on the wing; and on an isle in the river a bower; and on the mainland a Chinese mansion with a garret; and between the isle and the mainland a bridge, at the foot of which tilted a weeping willow, and over which ran two armed detectives and a pig-tailed judge, reading a frightful law book.

In the front gable of my garret was a round window into which the lone morning star smiled like the tear in an eye; and under it a cot. Beyond, God was in His Heaven with the angels.

I repeat, the first time I put eye on Margaret was in my garret. One afternoon I hurried home for my books, which I had forgotten in the morning, and which I needed at Cooper Union. The house was empty, but the trapdoor of my garret was open. She was on her knees, scrubbing, and also looking at pictures in my forty-pound Bible. Her hair was fastened up with the charm of a young girl who expects no callers. I stood on the garret stairs — under the table — with my head above the trapdoor. And I dared not crawl up to her, for she had not heard me climb the steps.

But suddenly she knew that I was there. She turned her face toward me and stared as though I had risen from the dead. I explained my errand. "God!" she gasped. "I thought it was Father."

I did not know then that her father was dead, or that he had fallen off a roof down upon an iron fence. He had been a roofer. Hurriedly I fetched my books and bowed myself down under the table and down the garret stairs. But after our first meeting my attic was complete in beauty. My heart throve in the joy of living there.

On her sixteenth birthday her mother invited the roomers and boarders to the party. I remember a young rival there, who worked as draftsman in a stoneyard, sketching details for the subway. After that night I wanted to be a draftsman. He was the gamest of sports; and he honored me, there in public, by having me check his sketches of a circular pitch of the Hudson Terminal Station. I did this mathematically, and my pleasure was intense, for it was the only time I ever helped to build a subway. We shook hands — and how lasting is a first handshake, and how broad are the arms of the simplest social contact! A decade later he sent us a baby boy — way from Brooklyn. His wife — Margaret's younger sister — had died. "Copperfield," our campus friends called our youngest.

Other men at the party became my lifelong friends: a bricklayer with a glass eye, who then and almost ever after earned more a day than I a week; a ruddy, bald-headed baker, who bubbled over with mirth, because he was slightly soused; a pale, emaciated peddler of spiritual pamphlets,

called "the Prophet," who literally lived on cold baths, peanuts, and prayers; an effeminate masseur with spats on his ankles, a lavender band on his hat, and a watch on his wrist; a dozen other interesting men.

Margaret's childhood friends were also there. I remember a bright high-school boy—"Doc" they called him—who drove an ice wagon after school hours and now is a noted physician. Never shall I forget a picnic where he blistered my tongue with a wild radish. At the party Margaret's hand touched him to the quick as he stole a kiss. "Starfish," she called him, because her fingers left the print of one crawling on his cheek.

Roomers and boarders grouped themselves in a parlor nook to smoke cigars and sip coffee. But I mingled with young and old, for Margaret was everywhere. I played forfeit games and told puns, threw peanut shells, and sang ragtime. I gazed through a coat sleeve while "Doc" poured water into it. "Starfishing," he called the game. Blindfolded, I knelt on the floor and swore allegiance to the flag while I bounced my fist, until a girl slid a pan of water under it. I tore half a sleeve off Margaret's party dress while my teeth picked a match from her puckering lips.

I told a story about a political boss who was entertained at a women's club where a hostess, eager to draw him out, asked in a whisper, "Have you read *Leaves of Grass*, Mr. O'Brien?" to which

he shook his head. Again she asked him in a whisper, "Tell me what you have read that's *piquant*?" "Ma'am," he replied in his rich brogue, "Oi 've red hair on me chest." Margaret was the only one who laughed. But before the party broke up I redeemed myself by spinning a good sailor yarn.

Margaret was warned against the sailor in the garret, but the warnings fanned her girlish curiosity into flame. I met her but seldom alone, and could not declare my intentions in front of others.

When I was away she tidied my garret. The air there was full of fragrance from her scrubbing brush, her sun-bleached linen sheets, her oil mop, and a dust cap that she once forgot, which I revered as a fetish. Only during my absence did she crawl into my garret. The ever-toiling widow, being the wise mother of a fair daughter, was not a little worried about males in general and sailors in particular. She and her God brought up the five children, for there was no mother's pension in those days. Margaret was twelve, and the oldest, when one day her idyllic home suddenly was swept away. A slip of a foot — a grasp at a rotten shingle — a widow — a rooming house — a daughter — and a foreign sailor, who had sailed sixty-seven thousand miles to find just this garret! What years of sorrows and what years of joys, because of a rotten shingle!

One night I met Margaret on the lower stairway. I struck a match and held it over our heads. She was holding a hand on her heart.

I stepped back and remarked in a tone which assured her that she was no child: "I would never hurt you in all my life."

She stood staring at me with a strange mist in her eyes. The match died out. "You do look like Father," she gasped, and rushed by before I had time to propose marriage. I would take no chance waiting, though I earned only a dollar a day.

On another occasion I fared better. She was taking off her wraps as I entered the hall. She tried to run, but decided to stay. I approached, bowing, and implied that I would be no more intrusive than she herself allowed, giving her time to regain her poise. But I stumbled on a carpet hole and my books flew out from under my arms. She chuckled while she helped me pick them up. Then we stood eyeing each other with tacit intimacy. "You like books?" she asked.

"Yes, I like books. Will you marry me?"

Her hand leaped to her thumping heart. I almost dodged. The motion reminded me of "Doc" at the party. Without answering, she skipped past me and vanished.

In the morning I wrote her a love note, which during the day crawled under the burlap tablecloth. I wrote her a daily love note — short,

suggestive epigrams, often quite clever, not always original. It was an unreciprocated correspondence, like my previous prayers at the Holy Rollers'. But she read them — for each day they were disarranged. Then one time I entered the house in the pitch of night, fatigued by a hard day's work in sweatshops and by my studies at school. My heart always beat fast when I climbed those stairs. A faint rustle, as of fingers stroking a papered wall, reached my ear. I held my breath and peered into the darkness, waiting halfway up the first flight until the rumble of an "L" train died. I resumed the climb, smiling at myself, when my hand, sliding up the balustrade, stopped. Tiny fingers stroked my hand and hopped away; then, like a warm, pulsating swallow, a hand nestled into mine. It quivered when I pressed it. And then it suddenly flew away into the darkness. There was no whirl of wings, nor the slightest rustle. In vain my arms grouped through space, touching thick, voluptuous darkness. But in my garret I found a red rose in a vase, above my hidden notes.

On an early Sunday morning I hiked through Prospect Park, where robins hopped on the green lawns, and where fishes in the ponds somersaulted to peek at spring, and where sprouting trees sparkled with dew and looked like brides. I shied off from the beaten road and found myself drifting through a path that wound into untrimmed shrub-

bery, down along a tall mile-long iron fence, where I met Margaret.

Hand in hand we swung open the gate of Greenwood and skipped into a lane under weeping willows, whose branches chirped with birds and drooped to whisk us close together. She stopped at a grave.

Out of other graves tombstones rose like friendly apparitions, peeking through the shrubbery, whispering a love language all their own: "Greater love hath no man than this"; "There is no fear in love." She glanced around. Sheltered in our first embrace from the eyes of the living, our lips awoke a thousand dead ancestors.

Many secret cemetery trysts did we have on early Sabbath mornings, and also on summer evenings, when the garden of the dead was bathed in moonlight, and foliage, glittering in green tints, rose along with white tombstones like a sea. Deeper into Greenwood we went, finding more secluded nooks, stumbling over hidden fences, nestling close when the hoot of an owl scared us.

Under a statue we cuddled up on polished marble steps — Thorwaldsen's Christ, spreading out his arms of blessing. The summer breeze carried odors of new-cut clover, lilac bushes, succulent sod, into my nostrils. But nothing was sweeter than the scent of her body. Under the stars her eyes kindled with a limpid glow as my fingers

stroked her hair and my lips dabbed her cheeks and browsed in the curves of her throat.

Then the chapel bell shook the night and we leaped up, counting the strokes, racing hand in hand down the lanes, tossing gravel at our shadows.

The following year I entered the better American homes through the kitchen door. The boarding house barely fed the widow and her children. Her rent was high. Margaret became a sales clerk at Loeser's. But she loved housework and especially cooking, and she hired out to a wealthy Flatbush family. I remember a lonesome couple, a banker and his wife, who were fond of joining our kitchen trysts. They discussed science with me, while Margaret looked on, amused, for she always thought they were teasing. They were skillful in arousing my interest — annoyingly so. "Prove it!" was their favorite demand.

I was never sure whether Margaret was right or whether their learning was limited. Two facts of physics they viewed with profound skepticism: that the same iron weight varied in heaviness between the North Pole and the Equator, and that a chunk of coal weighed the same as did the ashes and smoke it produced.

Once Margaret showed them a circular slide rule which I had made myself from strips of celluloid and a piece of cardboard. I could not afford to buy one. The banker put the problem to me:

"What is twenty-five dollars at eight per cent compound in seventeen years?" In thirty seconds I had the answer.

"Jesus!" was all he said. The two examined the slide rule in silence. Then they vanished into their own domain. Two hours later they returned, fanning their flushed faces with a dozen sheets of close computation.

"You're thirteen cents shy!" they yelled in chorus.

Margaret answered: "He is worse than that. He is five and a fifth cents too high."

At their instigation I won a five-dollar wager—and purchased Margaret a ring with a diamond chip. I warned the lonesome couple, but they insisted. The great dispute concerned the shortest crawling distance between a hungry spider and a fat fly in a room, twelve by twelve by thirty feet, the spider being at one end, at a point one foot from the ceiling and six feet from the side walls, and the fly being at the opposite end, at a point one foot from the floor and likewise six feet from the side walls. I said forty feet; they said forty-two.

"Prove it!" they shouted. I did. First by mathematics, met with filibustering, then by clipping a cracker box to scale and spreading it flat. The ring was too large for Margaret's finger. The jeweler said: "For why you should not spend seven-fifty? The smaller the finger,

the bigger the diamond, it should be." She lost it in a laundry tub. All day long, she tells me, her tears rolled from her cheeks down into the purring soapsuds. Some day we shall buy another — but with a pearl.

She hired out as cook at a country estate on the Hudson. Many a Sunday an old, old millionaire bachelor picked me up at the depot in his buggy and drove me up the river bluff into his park. A beaming child in an apron danced among pots and pans, prodding a huge pot roast, and scooping mashed potatoes, and every so often skipping across the floor to watch me turn an ice-cream freezer.

From sanctuaries beyond, a lame housekeeper, and also a buxom Swedish waitress, stole discreet glances. And the gardener's young assistant peeked through a pane on the rear porch.

Never before in my life had I tasted such morsels; nor had the wealthy bachelor. So he told me seven times on our last ride together. Her muffins, he said, were more efficient than Timothy's wine. And her prune sauce was rich with kernel flavors. He used the plural. He no longer cracked prune pits. They had to be cracked by molar teeth — as apples had to be gnawed by incisors — to catch the kernel flavors. He opened his jaw wide, and scratched a rustic finger nail on his two rows of strong, primitive teeth.

To this day I utter the names of food with

ravenous relish. For Margaret taught me English while I ate. The week long I lived on these meals and on their names, saving up for another train fare to Cornwall on the Hudson. I was like a famished mongrel. But, "No! No! Fold your hands." How grateful I was for the brevity of her prayer! "Lord, bless our bodies with my good food, and also with thine own good spirit. Amen."

Dinner over and the dishes in the sink, we climbed out along the Hudson bluffs, leaping over stumps and boulders, dancing through old Indian wood-paths and resting our throbbing limbs on the beach, a step from the river, on moss softer than seven Smyrna rugs. My eyes followed the rich colors of her face and my fingers touched her auburn hair, done Madonna fashion.

There again she exclaimed that I looked like her father. Her fingers clung to my wrists, fiercely. But soon she returned to Cornwall on the Hudson. She put her cheek to the ground and stroked it against the moss, and murmured pensively: "We're lying in the hand of God. It is so soft now — His hand is."

She took off her shoes and stockings and stuck a short foot ankle-deep into the same river which flowed at the Broadway canyon, and which had flowed when the Red Man, alone, lived on the land. Eddies caught five timid toes; and also an orbed sole and heel, bridged by a bold arch; and also a slim ankle.

In the dark of night, under the wing-spread of two tall, slim catalpa trees, we lay in a hammock, bosom to bosom, pure as the purest of God's children, strong as the strongest, her toes touching my ankles, her hair my chin, and her young body-line skipping as a shell on water. The trees waltzed, leaning on each other and parting, courting, rollicking to and fro, curtsying solemnly, whispering secrets with a thousand sibilant tongues.

From the gardener's cottage a man lilted a German lyric. The words, "*So hold und schön und rein*," ring in my ear still. From the manor house the waitress sang a Swedish folk song, and broke the spell of night, suddenly, with a wild, despairing outburst, singing, "*Nör jag var sjätton år* (When I was seventeen.)" A star followed a path through the thick catalpa foliage; and Margaret hummed the Cardinal's hymn, "Lead, kindly light."

In the fall she returned to Brooklyn, brown as an Indian and with a glow in her eye. She was the same child, yet her kiss was mellower. We went to Manhattan secretly and, just before closing time at City Hall, found the license bureau. There a clerk told us to return to Brooklyn: Borough Hall was the place for us. Our lips drooped. We should be too late. Could he not break the rule, please? "Wedding guests are coming," I fibbed.

He led us into a private office with rugs, ma-

hogany, and curtains, to a man whose voice was gentle, and whose eyes gleamed kindly. Pendergast was his name. I thought he was the mayor.

"Are we married?" I asked Margaret, as we stepped out, reading the license together.

"No. We must find a minister."

We passed a majestic Broadway church, surrounded by tilting gravestones. But we feared to enter, and looked for other churches, finding none.

"There is a church on every street of Brooklyn," Margaret whispered. And we ran through the canyons and through the Battery, for the ferry.

There, in the Italian quarter on Dean Street, we found a puny little church and, next to it, the parson's dwelling.

"Where are your witnesses?" he asked as we sat down in his office.

"We have n't any."

He looked us over sombrelly. "Have you a wedding ring for the bride?"

I shook my head. He called his wife from the kitchen — she dropped her apron on his desk — and a young man from the street. Hurriedly he read a page from a book and filled out a large parchment scroll that swarmed with plump and pink baby angels, while the young man from the street wiggled his ears to make Margaret look less solemn.

The same evening we bought a gold-filled ring

for a dollar, and a white rose for fifty cents, and two tenderloin steaks at Childs' for eighty cents. Then we had our photos taken, half a dozen for two dollars. I owned exactly a quarter when I crawled into my garret; and a certificate of marriage — with five signatures — flat on my chest like a cough plaster; and a child wife two flights below.

We found new friends in a young artist and his wife. Already our love world began to grow. Margaret posed for him. A stream of soft white chiffon drape broke on her one shoulder and hung limberly down her nymphaean body, meeting at her feet and trailing behind, yet gliding along, rolling and falling from leap to leap, almost pursuing her as she fled down to a wood pond. With brushes, trowels, and paints the artist put her strength on canvas — the girlishness of her spirit, her flow of hair, the health that glowed in her eye, the rhythm in her limbs from toes to fingertips, her firm flesh colors, enriched by her modesty. His wife brought her coffee when goose flesh spoiled the pose; for the studio was chilly.

Nothing is true enough or ever can be. For every star has a million points of view, and so has every atom, and so has love. We reasoned together with our feelings, and, therefore, with primitive harmonies. My garret became her garret. We had faith in the tremors of our knees, and in our warm, unpolluted blood, and in the

young curves of our bodies. Like God and pagan and modern youth, we knew of no sin.

Barefooted she came tiptoeing up the garret stairs, as if she rose through the air, appearing in the shadow of the trapdoor and under the straddling table like a beloved bride arisen from the grave, spreading out her white arms with touching confidence for me to give her a lift.

The candle flame flickered in the green D.O.M. bottle, spilling drops of red wax along a frail lead strip that long ago sealed a priestly liqueur. In a homemade wooden frame two roses — a red and a white — pressed their faces against the glass. Two blue, beady gas flames burned steadily above. From the flights below the steady breathing of sleeping men rose to my garret. A mouse thrummed its feet on the resonant floor, speeding by behind the queen-posts. My birds awoke — Margaret spoiled them — and we fed them lump sugar, and set ourselves down on cushions, our backs against warm chimneys.

At the front gable — outside the round window — the purest of snow, untrampled, glittered on a city of roofs. A star passed by, peered into our garret, smiling, then vanished.

How we did talk during these garret trysts, though we wrote long, daily love letters — not short notes — to each other! These she treasures still, though I have begged her twenty times to burn them all. It was my third winter at the

Cooper Union night school and my third year as electrician apprentice. I was earning nine dollars a week and could almost support a wife, immigrant fashion. But why should Margaret live immigrant fashion? She was American. Our garret was cozy — almost as cozy as the home we bought ourselves a dozen years later.

She frightened "the Prophet" once when she passed him in the upper hallway, he from his plunge, she from my garret. "A ghost is haunting this house," he told the baker, who replied by pathetic side nods, lifting a finger to his forehead, describing a zero. But one Sunday morning the jovial baker moved. He too had seen the ghost. "His bones rattled more than did the Prophet's," Margaret told me later. "Whiskey!" sneered the one-eyed bricklayer. The draftsman whistled, and so did the masseur.

Our secret leaked out. Margaret rushed me off to her aunt. But not until years later, when we returned from the West, college-bred, did the aunt quite forgive us our elopement. She had grown wealthy by then, and handed me a roll of brand new hundred-dollar notes to invest in a home — thirty-nine in all.

Margaret rushed me off to old Uncle John, a rough but solid fellow. In his youth he had been cowpuncher, lumberjack, gold digger. And when the family gathered in solemn conclave to decide my doom, he stuck by us. "What 's the matter

with the fellow? Does he drink? Is he sick? Does n't he want to work? Did n't he marry Maggie?"

I went West alone, with my toolbag and with a painting wrapped in a silk kimono. A fortnight later — the longest in my life — she came.

In Chicago I advanced from shop to office. At sixty dollars a month — as electrical draftsman — we lived and loved luxuriously. Our savings we mailed to Florida, though the returns netted us only a ten-acre swamp, which we never even took title to. That was *my* fault, however.

Her budget was marvelous: —

Grocery	\$15.00
Rent, four-room flat	12.00
Furniture, on time	12.00
The Everglades, on time	10.00
Correspondence school, on time	5.00
Carfare	3.00
Clothes	2.00
Eight movies	.40
Miscellaneous: church, candy	.60
	\$60.00

Fuel I gathered on Artesian Avenue — tarred paving blocks that had been replaced by asphalt. Margaret trimmed my hair.

Chicago was a city of "eats." Every feed was a feast, and some were sumptuous revels. The pot roasts Margaret fed me! She always gave me

tender, crackling fork nibblings — with pumpernickel, salt, oleomargarine, raw celery — before potatoes and gravy were done. I gobbled the juicy roast and lapped the fork she held, and begged for more until she held out another nibbling and another, at arm's length — “to watch the sheen” in my eyes, she said.

Perch she fried for me on glowing coals at a swift stream in the outskirts, where we saved a drowning Negro, whose hold made my nose bleed beautifully. Five mud hens we caught, plucked, broiled, and ate one day in the swamps of Cicero. Fried sheep brain we ate at poor Cameille's — my first Chicago friend, a former priest, but then a factory hand. Plates of prune soup we sponged on “broke” days at Sophie's boarding house. Turkey we munched and wine we sipped on Christmas Day at old man Birn's — the foundry foreman. “Wieners” and flyspecked rolls we swallowed — and with relish — at a camp meeting somewhere in the woods, one stifling summer Sabbath, while Margaret charmed a bishop.

Demi-tasse and pastry we tasted at the parsonage of a French Protestant church, where we went to find Cameille a job as tutor. He was the most learned man I have ever met, and such a helpless child — son of a Polish count and a French countess, born in Paris at the Russian embassy under Alexander the Tsar. The day I went farther West he gave me a sacred book upon

which he wrote, in Latin, "We die whenever we lose a friend." And he gave me a vest-pocket flask in carved brass. With both he had shriven many a dying immigrant.

Gallons of coffee we cooked during the winter, when young people gathered around our kitchen stove, everybody taking turns at chopping tarred paving blocks on a padded drafting board. Eight wedlocks — and lasting ones — we promoted among mail carriers, milkmen, butchers' and grocers' clerks, draftsmen, and factory hands, and their respective sweethearts, that first winter.

A lake trip to Ludington stands out as the rarest of honeymoon trips. We were sent as delegates to a church convention there, with steamer fares paid, and board and room for four days free of charge. That week I ate literally barrels of Michigan peaches, which fruit farmers dumped in feeding troughs at the church. The fun we had, Margaret and I, diving for dimes in cold Lake Michigan, while a score of pastors and a hundred delegates cheered! And she a month with child!

On our return a storm blew up. At midnight a small gale tossed the steamer in the air like a basket ball. Delegates leaped out of their berths and gathered in the crowded lounging room, singing, "Led by Jesus, we are traveling home!" A seasick pastor asked me how far we were from land. Quick as a flash Margaret responded: "I know that joke. Fifty fathoms." She was

not even seasick in that gale, and after all those peaches. My own stomach was weak.

Yes, Chicago was a city of "eats." For three years — every blessed working day — I had starved.

She wanted a child, though she was a child herself, riding horseback at picnics on the shoulders of our parson and bartering scandalous secrets with his daughters. During the months that followed our honeymoon trip I marveled at her spirit. One night she pressed my hand tight against her abdomen. "Feel the kick he has," she said with a jubilant ring in her voice. I held my breath. From another world my fingers caught the stirrings of a new being.

I was her only nurse. Daily the pastor's wife, God bless her, dropped in to bathe the baby. It was a cold spring. I tucked the little fellow into a laundry basket next to the kitchen stove, and the night long kept a fire that singed the basket. Once I touched his hand to feel how warm it was. He clasped my finger. What a grip! And he would not let go. I feared to pry open his fist — I might break his fingers. I carried basket and all to Margaret, awaking her from her first mother slumber. She freed my finger — and asked for her breakfast.

Two weeks, and she was at the "L" station to meet me! The boy was riding on her right hip. Thus she always carried him, holding on to him

with one arm and swinging the other. People used to stop on the street to look, when she sped by, her small energetic feet stepping with a style entirely her own, and the baby rocking on her limber hip, his back to her. Such happy chums we were, the three of us!

He was nine months old and teething when he bit his mother's breast. How that human animal raged when we weaned him! We did not have sense enough to wean him gradually. He always grunted before mealtime. "H-r-r-u-h! H-r-r-u-h!" he said. In vain we fed him zwieback and milk, potatoes and gravy, bread and sugar, and water. "H-r-r-u-h! H-r-r-u-h!" he said for hours, and looked at us as if we had betrayed him. A rubber nipple and a breast pump were factors in the social growth of son and father. Our growth had just begun. "H-r-r-u-h! H-r-r-u-h!"

V

DOOMSDAY

WHEN my legs dangled on a rough church bench in my childhood, and the preacher implored the Holy Ghost to "fill" his flock, things beyond nature were revealed to me. For something unearthly crawled into my legs and hung on like frost, with a thousand tiny fingers, growing dead heavy. This something never did fill all of my body, — I always feared that it might, — only my legs. And when I limped out of church it sank to my toes like sediment and simmered out peacefully.

After that time I grew aware of other wonders. A dozen times I eluded sudden death. I lived my days of adolescence brimmed with bliss. I found a mate, sound as her native soil. And I learned that chance had won me more than my ancestral share of wealth: brawn, blessed by the great goodness of nature; brains enough to catch a truth or two on the wing; and the greatest of all, because a universe in miniature, blood that could "feel" beauty. My feelings floated in my veins. Yet in the narrow sense I gave neither God nor Devil any credit. My anchor was held by many million links.

Once I had failed to find God — at eighteen, during a raging spring fever. “Too large an order! God is the universe,” a friend whispered. “Too small an order! There is no God,” exclaimed another. “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein!” a third quoted. “A child is a functional fool,” snarled a fourth. “The purest of poetry!” murmured my blood.

As I grew older I came to love the church, save when hymns were sung like jazz, or when the house of God was built of spruce, or when the man of holy orders was very young and raw with tonsillitis. I even joined a church; though I never grew so intimate as did my friends with God and Devil. And I was flustered. Resolved on finding God, though He had once declined to come to me, I set out for an unknown world, eagerly as when I ran away to sea seven years before.

My flight from earth began the spring Margaret took year-old Junior East. Home was hell without her. Restlessly I walked the rounds of the rooms, patting the furniture as I would her little hand. And I lost my appetite and relished nothing save sorghum and pancakes. A mountain slide starts with a pebble. Who can tell whether pancakes were not the prime cause of my flight from earth? Our young Saint Bernard, Fenris, which poor Cameille had given Margaret, died.

There were other causes, beside the pancakes,

for the fanaticism I am about to describe. Yet even a raindrop cannot be fathomed fully until the universe is fathomed. And like all reasons, few and simple, which retrace the winding path of truth, my own, no doubt, are "rationalizations" — a useful word of science, and a hideous word that stings my ears, eyes, and larynx.

Above all else my desire for higher learning drove me out. But I dared not foster my longing for college until Margaret began to encourage me. In the old country, only nobility and clergy rose to such heights. I sprang from the lowest layer, where a trade ranked and was a climb because of its long apprenticeship.

I had planned on electrical engineering. I wanted so badly to grasp the mystery which from the day at fourteen, when I was lineman with my father on the coast of Jutland, had filled me with awe. For until I cut the first metal wire that we strung I had believed a telephone line was but a hollow speaking tube. This mystery had drawn me into serving years as electrician apprentice, had lured me through the night life of Manhattan's power houses and through Cooper Union's laboratories, and had drawn me close to my experimental bench and drafting table in Chicago.

Mathematics had already pushed me beyond nature by depicting events long ago dead, such as a solar eclipse ages back above a famous battlefield, and by predicting things before they occur,

such as the nothingness of matter at absolute zero temperature.

My work pushed me very near the unknown world beyond nature. The X-ray was starting to split the atom. And among the country's master mechanics I drew and designed huge, powerful X-ray machines. Daily I juggled with a hundred thousand volts, once with a full million, and played with my own bone shadows — from those embracing a gland within my cranium to those which the Holy Ghost of my childhood clutched within my feet.

My work took me to a scientific laboratory and to several medical centres and private clinics, where I found the scientist, whose craving for new knowledge was contagious. I fear that I have angered many a wife during supper, when doctor and I were tossing our thoughts upon swift Tesla waves. These great Americans treated me as they would their equal. Healers, teachers, preachers, they were, healing the sick, teaching man the safest road to life, and preaching about a vast unknown world.

Everywhere I found a milestone pointing toward the mystery beyond nature. At an institution for the insane near Chicago I saw and heard the restless mind grope in a morass of "telepathic thought," "revenge by radio," "God's eternal wrath." My own thoughts and feelings found excuses to set sail for unknown shores. My will became a bundle of

subtle deceptions that furnished me with passport as delusions did these inmates.

When later at college, after my fanatic fling, I veered off to other poles, — even becoming an intolerant atheist, — a noted Dante scholar called me “a rolling stone that gathers no moss.” And a fellow of Norse and Gothic nicknamed me “Peer Gynt.” They were both wrong. I was more of a Brand, crying, “All or nothing!” And I gathered moss a plenty, till a mountain toppled over. I was a Brand, but plus and minus. For I ducked when I saw the mountain coming.

My adventure was wide in scope, peddling Doomsday books through the West, hibernating one winter within a Doomsday seminary, hurling fire and brimstone at lumberjacks in the north-western woods. And these were useful prerequisites for the State University, where I landed after my flight from earth. For the first secured us rent, tuition, books, during my freshman year; the second gave me seven out of fifteen precious high-school credits needed; and the third trained my tongue to persuade the registrar to give me a trial. Mathematics and physics I had at my finger tips. I tutored co-eds. Blueprints of modern X-ray machines I offered the registrar in lieu of high-school credits; also parchments of three years' apprenticeship from firms in Manhattan; also a scrawly note from a skipper with the word “sobriety” twice underlined, — for reasons good

and true, — and endorsed by an old chief of my stoker days and by a consul somewhere in the Caribbean. Lucky for me that italics are used for emphasis as well as irony. For the last credential filled the gap.

But I am running ahead of my story. My growth had really been quite logical until Margaret went East. I was then efficiency expert at an electrical plant, timing human motion in fractions of a second, and reducing the fraction. One noon when the whistle blew I smashed my stop watch vehemently against the factory floor amid a group of girls. Two hours later, at a down-town rooming house, a man interviewed me. At night I set out with his crew of magazine canvassers, swamping the towns of old Illinois.

“Junior is dying of summer complaint. Come at once. — MARGARET”

“He is not dying, darling. Please come West,” I wired back, with fare as far as the Mississippi. His viscera revolted against the heat and sudden weaning. The magazine canvassing had been a crooked game. A sheriff arrested the manager for pocketing subscription money. I quit the crew at Davenport, Iowa, with thirty-odd dollars saved up for Margaret’s fare. Two days later we rushed Junior to a sanitarium supplied with saintly nurses. Margaret stayed at his bedside night and day, struggling with death and aiding life in

his little body. I slept on a slab in the baths.

The patients there were mostly worn-out farmers, whom the nurses rejuvenated by ice, steam, and water baths, and by kneading their muscles in creams, soaps, salts, and powders. I gave a voluntary hand scrubbing the stiff old men, and learned some of the arts of hydrotherapeutics.

A night nurse was pondering over a Greek testament — a young Sister with a voice like Margaret's and eyes like Joan of Arc's. She told me that Doomsday was close at hand; she could prove it mathematically. And mathematics appealed to me — a penniless stranger, homeless and stranded with a young wife and a dying child.

By dawn the night nurse had proved that the day of doom was fast approaching. She was skillful, like my teacher at Cooper Union, both hands working pencils simultaneously at left and right of the equation. Doomsday was at hand. The old historic prophecy grew plain as fact. She showed me the formula in King James: —

“457 B.C. + 2300 years + threescore and ten = DOOMSDAY.”

And there were many other numbers: days and weeks, months and years, times and generations, hours even. How all pointed to that fatal day! And there was the “number of wisdom” of Revelation xiii, “Six hundred threescore and six,” which none, not even poor Cameille, could “count.” But her answer to this passed judgment upon one of

the holy fathers, whose picture, for æsthetic reasons and because it resembles Caillebotte, at present hangs in my library. "VICARIVS FILII DEI" was his title. She scribbled the Latin phrase down on paper. "Count the Roman numerals of that title," she whispered like an oracle through the quiet summer night. And thrills ran down my spine at the harmony of numbers.

She solved my financial worries. The publishing house of her church was in need of canvassers. I began to peddle five-dollar Doomsday books in tooled morocco. And on the road I quoted the fatal formula so often that Doomsday invaded my heart. A country doctor, whose old obsolete X-ray machine I revived, was the first to buy the book. He was hilarious, inviting me to lunch and taking me to his attic to show me a pickled corpse which he was writing a book about.

The next to buy was a young farmer, who was laid up with "rheumatics." I massaged him as I had seen the nurses do the patients, punching his bones and squeezing dirt out of his joints and knuckles. I buttered his skin for lack of cold cream and rolled and pinched his muscles. I scoured his flesh from neck to toes with sand and salt and scrubbing brush. Soap was scarce, and he had not been washed for moons. I flushed him with well water and rubbed him with wheat sacks — empty ones, of course. His rheumatism vanished that very day.

While I held up another farmer his mare leaped over a fence and got part of a fence post into her thigh. With a halter I hoisted one of her legs up under her belly, crawled beneath, and with my razor sliced out the sliver, sewing up the wound with a fish line. And the owner bought my book.

Farm hands who at night slept beside me — in heavy underwear — bought the book with a smile and a cheer of good luck. I helped with the chores at dawn.

Whether I found a prim bride in her kitchen, cooking, or a picturesque old farmerette, milking barefoot in the barn, a word of praise brought added beauty into her eyes and opened her heart and pocketbook. The women looked up to me with reverence, for I was to be a missionary. One woman who had a passion for confessing clung to me. The sale of the Doomsday book was at stake. Gently, like a shy girl, I freed myself.

Farmers and townspeople along the Mississippi, and west through Iowa, treated me as though I were Saint John of Patmos. They offered me their best top buggy, riding pony, flivver, bicycle, once even a launch. The Doomsday book sold. I had never in my young life seen so much money. Each week I saved fifty dollars. Yet I should have disliked the canvassing trade if I had peddled dime novels or stereoscope sets or pictures of Washington crossing the Delaware. Money came rolling too easily, as in a poker game among drunks.

But I was on a mission, zealously warning the Western farmer. The book had led many a man to sell his farm and go preaching.

I suddenly began to embrace the globe. Doomsday was not pigeonholed because of my fortune. China should know the formula too, while it was yet time. I was in dead earnest in preparing myself and family for the mission field. At the seminary a short course in Doomsday mathematics! Then off to China trumpeting! And Margaret was game, though she insisted — and wisely so — on my becoming a medical rather than a Doomsday missionary. This would mean the university.

Junior survived. And sixteen weeks from that day in Chicago when I smashed my stop watch we were headed for a seminary located in a fertile Minnesota valley.

The Doomsday seminary was a cloister-like building. Its basement was used for laundry, kitchen, dining-room; its first floor for office, classrooms, chapel; its second floor for the women's dormitory, and its third for the men's. A farm of thirty pure-bred cows, bathed twice a day, supplied food for two hundred ascetic men and women.

The Bible teacher there was a Lincoln-like gray-beard, married to a very young girl suffering from heart trouble. He carried her to chapel in his arms. He was the author of a pamphlet that I

memorized from cover to cover, in which he traced the scattered seed of Adam through Biblical generations and up through all the races of earth. But beside being an historian he was a Doomsday mathematician of repute. When he placed a thumb upon a prophecy, and words broke through his beard, Doomsday loomed. It was strange indeed, I thought, that so few people knew of the world's end, though the doctrine was American and had sprung out of New England soil a whole century before.

The teacher of music was a violinist blind from birth. He taught me hymns on the organ and Margaret minuets on the piano. He groped for my fingers on the keyboard until I felt creepy. When I failed to get the tempo right, his grunts of agony sapped my energy. And I came out of the music room sweating. Margaret quit him. "Too much finger trouble," she said. Yet he was a great musician.

I found a gentle doctor from Heidelberg there, with pearly teeth, rosy cheeks, strong blue eyes, a curly beard, and a succulent voice and language. He and his wife were fond of literature, German and English. He was the first to cultivate my taste for the literary arts. And the more orthodox faculty members were not a little disturbed about his worldly influence on a young brother.

We arrived a fortnight early, in the midst of the canning season, and found the teachers busy

rinsing, boiling, and sealing the students' winter "grub," and wheeling it into huge cellars. No work was too menial for these saints. We adored them from the start. Especially did we love the president. He was a baldheaded philosopher, small of stature like Zacchæus, and, like him, acrobatic. He climbed the cellar stairs on his hands swifter than Margaret on her feet. And he had always time to play, though Doomsday was near. For he worked twice as fast as his spiritual siblings. Yet he was never frivolous.

On a limb of an oak a swing was suspended, upon which one noon he and Margaret faced each other. They swung so high that I gasped. They might whirl around the limb. "Higher!" shouted Margaret. The rope burst. They flew through the air, arms spread like divers, and vanished behind a privet hedge. And they returned stained, not with blood, but with tomatoes. On my shoulder Junior bounced with joy. "Higher!" he shouted.

This man ran the seminary like a clock. Students and teachers alike chummed with him. From seven in the morning until eleven at night he drove us. And we never grew tired of toiling. For he worked harder than any and "performed" while he worked. If Doomsday had come he might have entertained the heavenly host.

Margaret grew popular at once because of her skill in vegetarian cooking. Where had she ever learned that? She was cook of the canning party.

I found work also before the students arrived. I mopped floors, cleaned windows, tore down walls to make classrooms larger, nailed up a metal ceiling in the laundry and kitchen, doctored drop-lights in a hundred dormitory rooms, shortened the chandeliers in the chapel to even out the light, and installed washing machines for the two hundred students, who I soon found were as cleanly as angels.

The president gave me a hand. His rickety ladder "stepped" while he stood on the top rung, stretching on tiptoe. He painted more ceiling than I. In my eagerness to beat him I spilled a quart of white lead. The dear old fellow chuckled and never so much as frowned. And he rinsed jars by the thousand, and gave Margaret a whole gross, and tomatoes and crab apples to fill them, besides twenty bushels of potatoes. He granted me a full year's free tuition, and paid me forty dollars in cash and called us "a pair of perfect gophers." Never before had I met such a man.

And he never took the matron to account when she smuggled a jar of jam and a dozen of fresh eggs down to our two-room flat above the millinery shop on Main Street. She was very fond of Margaret and too wise to discuss Doomsday. No one knew what she believed. The jam and the eggs did all her preaching.

The students were past the twenties, some in

the forties and fifties. They were shy and awkward, yet always on the watch for a Doomsday debate. And they were sly and cunning when they argued. None could rouse their ire. Bible debating was their sport. They told of their debates with men of other faiths as a soldier would about his battles.

At chapel some would whimper, greatly disturbed that they might lose out on Doomsday. Unlike the "bums" of the Bowery mission, they did not brag of their sins. It would be a close competition even for the purest of saints. Slightly more than one eighth of a million would be chosen on the great day. This prophecy puzzled me. For what was the use, then, of my spreading the Doomsday doctrine among China's half a billion heathen?

After the seminary started its regular schedule the students did two hours' manual labor daily. And the distribution went as smoothly as in a beehive. Each teacher had charge of a group and completed the work assigned him. The manager of the farm headed the squads that dug potatoes, cut sorghum stalks, bathed and milked the cows, cleaned the barns. The president himself ran a repair shop, printing shop, business office. There were squads for cooking and mopping, sewing and laundry work, painting and blacksmithing, building sheds and barns, breaking new land. The women worked for the matron.

Beside being house electrician I was official architect, drawing up plans for a much needed Greater Doomsday Seminary, which to-day stands strong and massive, but "for sale." At two bits an hour I also made mechanical drawings for a fellow student, who — Doomsday or no Doomsday — believed himself the inventor of *mobile perpetuum*.

During the Indian summer of Minnesota we wandered through woodland, enchanted by a thousand gorgeous tints and hues. And as fall advanced we speared black bass through thin ice in the river rushes. When snow fell we bobsleighed down the mile-long seminary hill. And on mild winter nights we skated on the mill dam with Junior packed in a beer box.

Beside all our friends at school we found good friends in the village. A grizzly farm hand, whom I met at the village library, paid us weekly visits with lollipops for Junior and Margaret, and Thomas Paine, Thomas Huxley, and Thomas Browne — always doubting Thomases — for me. His own name was Tomas Tomassen. Margaret grew intimate with a lovely girl of her own age, who was somewhat ostracized for having been betrayed by her sister's husband. Junior and Franz played together. When the grandmother butchered a pig she sent us pickled pig's feet and blood bologna. And I would nibble at these favorite dishes of my childhood, though this was a car-

dinal sin, since pork and blood were taboo, according to Leviticus.

The house we lived in was the oldest on Main Street. Within the woodshed we discovered a well, clean enough for washing. A neighbor's pump supplied us with water safe enough for cooking. And for drinking I fetched buttermilk by the bucket, thick with floating butter lumps. Once a week the surplus from a dairy flooded Main Street. A land "flowing with milk and honey."

At country clearings I found fuel. Farmers even paid me for pulling shrubs. A penny for each root they paid. One single day I pulled as many as two hundred roots; but then I began at four in the morning. When I hauled a trainload of soft coal from depot to seminary, the president once gave me a wagonful. It was then thirty-five below zero. Our potatoes froze hard as rock. I split them with an ice pick. And our precious jars of tomatoes began to burst.

We loved our little home best when the real northwestern winter came. One room was small but lofty, and filled with winter forage. The other was just the reverse, very large but lowly, — it was not designed for tiptoeing, — and furnished in saintly simplicity for an ascetic Doomsday family. A single cot — we slept spoon-fashion and Junior rocked on my chest — slunk elusively along the southern wall. A kitchen table, long-legged, wobbly, and calflike, leaned against the western wall.

An old ten-dollar organ, on which I practised hymns and Margaret minuets, stood against the northern wall, broad and important, and with its two square bellows pedals protruding like peasant feet. If we stepped on one the organ growled, even without our touching the keys. Against the eastern wall, and used in lieu of chairs, lay a flat trunk of clothes and a box of books, salvaged by Chicago friends the day the landlord dumped our worldly goods on the sidewalk.

A trio of wood, coal, and oil stoves stood at attention in the centre. Margaret called them "the Trinity." She had bought them from a student and his bride of a week, who to-day are missionaries in China. Sixty-five cents she paid. And the name stuck, even through our college years. For one was a zealous sheet-iron blazer, another was a meek, warm-hearted cannon heater, and the third was a burner for cooking, with a wick and a tank and a warning which we ignored once too often: "Do not fill when burning."

During long winter nights in this, our "holiest of all," we watched Junior grow. At birth he had been a bundle of body tissue. At eighteen months he was two bundles; and one was made up of loud thoughts and feelings. His words became flesh, or his flesh became words — I knew not which. He turned into a living soul, or a living soul turned into him — I knew not which. He became a child within a child, I thought at that time.

The energy he had, despite his recent illness ! He followed me into the woodshed, where his one little hand clung to my knee and the other helped me heave a bucket of water, while he leaned over the well to watch the spill dribble. He crawled through a neighbor's bramble hedge, where a mastiff with slavering flews leaped at him. Ever after I was sure the Lord of Heaven dropped a brick at my feet that very moment.

A bearded student took him cowriding from the pasture ; and twice he climbed over the Holstein horns, down into the drinking trough. I tied a halter round his waist so that I might worship God in peace at chapel times and let him play in a classroom ; but he crawled down a ventilator, almost hanging himself. He found the seminary's coal hole — I shiver at the memory. And while Margaret was busy at the school farm, cooking for an outside threshing crew, he caused the only Doomsday stir of the year by exploring the crowded classrooms.

I was a rover like Junior and, like him, in search of the unknown, sensitive to outside things and strong enough to stand the strain of change. I was a babe unfolding and grew aware of a mystery within. What was the *soul* and the *spirit* ? What was *thought* and *feeling* ? But I was not ready to explore the world within.

An idyllic Western village ; a bucolic landscape

of farms and pasture, hills and forests, lakes and rivers; the dizzy prairie star in frost — these were new things that took hold of my heart and pulled. Vegetarian food — potatoes and tomatoes — and a huggable mate whom I dared not kiss because of my Doomsday phobia — these were things that made my spirit flighty. Suddenly I was jerked back to mediæval times, to a monklike life among ascetic brethren in a crowded cloister, to early speculations and naïve theology, to fantastic formulæ and discarded doctrines. My feet lost their grip on mother earth. I soared beyond the prairie star, centuries back of the X-ray and stop watch. My eye was turned *out* and *up*, not *in* and *down*. But my inner world remained sound, unexplored till the time should arrive when I was strong enough to make my final voyage, and succeed by finding, not God, but myself.

As the winter crept on I grew more fanatic, even raising a beard to look like other brethren. Sabbath was kept religiously from sunset to sunset. But our vespers never began on the dot; for Margaret could not keep track of the sun, which went down earlier and earlier before Christmas and later and later after Christmas. She would be washing the floor the very moment that the sun's edge began to disappear. And it was a race between the two, the sun always winning. The next night at vespers — Margaret called it "sun worship" — she would watch the horizon

and even begin to pick up dishes that had piled up from the previous night. As the sun vanished she leaped at her work, chuckling at my mild exhortations. Then she tickled my chin coquettishly and sang a parody of a Doomsday hymn: "If only thou wouldst eat a bloody beefsteak." And she would dance a teasing gypsy dance to celebrate the passing of Sabbath, risking a splinter or two in her foot and showing an ankle. Never had she been so bewitching. I began to dream.

She had gotten me to join the regular high-school classes instead of matriculating in the famous Doomsday short course which within the winter turned farmers into missionaries. My history course was wide in scope and scant in detail. It began with Adam, 4004 B.C., and rushed me up through the ages of patriarchs, judges, kings, prophets, apostles, saints, stopping abruptly at Charlemagne. And from the last king of my Doomsday history to Gorm den Gamle, the first king of my Danish history, was but a small gap. Between Creation and Doomsday I was, therefore, oriented. I know the reigns of the Hebrew kings as well as I know the reigns of all the Danish kings. And I know Abraham's birthday, and the date young Alexander drank himself to death, and the year Esther appeared before Ahasuerus, and the year Ruth gleaned after Boaz. Yet at the State University later I almost failed to earn my foolscap

when I cut a compulsory history course — which I deemed superfluous — off my programme.

Languages were hard for me to master. And Latin was as toilsome as all my other courses put together. I was the dunce, though I did catch the grand system of grammar.

“Amavi, amavisti, amavit,
Amavimus, amavistis, amaverunt.”

Margaret sang this stanza often — and thumbed her nose at Doomsday.

Perhaps it was the artist within that sought escape. Every child is an artist. His senses desire freedom like the beast's. Three tales in English literature made profound imprints on my heart: *Ivanhoe*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Ancient Mariner*. I identified myself with the heroes, something I had never done in my reading before. I had won fair Rowena and I was a knight. I was a pilgrim in search of a door to Heaven, almost taking Bunyan literally. I had killed, if not the albatross, many a warbling lark. The one nest of my childhood gave me a “glittering eye.”

Three American poems entered my blood: *The Vision of Sir Launfal* — a quest that never ceases till one returns to himself; *The Raven* — a cry into darkness as yearning as the blind musician's violin; *Snow-bound* — with that New England Doomsday woman, who like myself watched for

The Lord's quick coming in the flesh,
Whereof she dreams and prophecies !

The blind musician's fingers, which wrung sensuous tones out of catgut, stroked the embossed code of a Bible, crawling limberly along the road toward the same unknown world that I was seeking while his tongue smacked with thought, and his lips thought in whispers, and his eyelids signaled God as a woman her secret lover. At times he played me into a world of wilder beauty than the one in the valley. He was of Ibsen's viking stock, a melancholy man, brooding like my grandfather, and with the same power in his violin as the latter in his voice. His tones "hung" upon my cheeks and shoulders, not unlike the Holy Ghost in my feet at church, or like those bottles of rare Caribbean rum. It was gravity upside down. I sank upward.

Then came spring, and students scattered, either to peddle Doomsday books or to preach. I took a route straight north and peddled sacred wall mottoes and a hydrotherapeutic doctor book. That summer's nourishing sunshine and open air, toil and food, pulled me down to earth again, though it took another year before I fully backslid.

From Hennepin Avenue in the centre of Minneapolis, where I bought Tony, a fine high-strung bicycle, I rode up through northern Minnesota, crossed the steep coulees along the border, rode

up through Manitoba to Winnipeg, and farther up to a lake that looked like the ocean, then along the coast from one Icelandic settlement to another, and finally across forest and prairie. Like Louis Hennepin two centuries before, I broke new ground in Canada. And like him I became an adventurous missionary. China's half a billion was my goal still.

Tony and I encountered many dangers together. A wild-haired prairie minx and her broncho towed us through a strong head wind from a post office somewhere in the wilderness to her father's homestead. How that barelegged girl rode! And how I clung to Tony, whose pedals kicked my shanks! We were assaulted by half-wild huskies, which, the winter long, hauled the fisherman's catch from ice holes far from shore. They had never seen a bicycle, those huskies. And my feet, pulling the pedals, maddened them. We daggled through a swamp on Hekla Island, at times lucky enough to leap along a string of logs, which was the King's mail route. I lost my balance and clung to Tony till the mail came by — a sack conveyed by a barefoot Iclander. How did he ever get those massive books I mailed across that bog?

A tree in the northern timber woods fell just as we came speeding through a stumpy path. It was too late to stop. We hurried by and got entangled in a hill of branches. A thunderstorm that smelled of ozone drove us to a village of

aborigines and to the hut of a squaw and her squinting infant. A gaunt chief one night drove us across untrodden prairie, thirty miles with horse and buggy. He had come to the lone prairie store where I found him to buy tea and crystal sugar. And at midnight on the prairie, while wolf and coyote howled, he made a tiny tongue of fire that licked a kettle trembling on a reed.

One night Tony overtook a heavy half-breed, who was moving farther north with his pigs and horses, his mother and wife, and his daughter, called "Almost-as-white-as-birch-bark." That night we dug out an organ from under his wagon-load of furniture. And beneath the prairie star, three days' journey from church, I played the hymns I had learned the previous winter. I taught "Birchie" two, one of which was a Doomsday hymn of weird beauty by my blind music master. While she practised I gave her heavy father a ride on Tony, holding on to the saddle as I ran along. Tony groaned and bucked and at last threw him off against the organ. I still hear the finale of that prairie nocturne — the half-breed's long gorilla snort, Tony's thrumming, "Birchie's" crystal-clear cry, and the organ jamming the line, "Nearer, my God, to Thee," into a frantic, impatient yowl.

We lodged with many a rusty prairie bachelor. Once a half-blind senile, before I lay down to sleep beside him, searched my shirt to learn if I were

lousy. His cows had died from poisoned well water, and his rain-water barrel was empty. His dog, whose broken leg I set, had been caught in a wolf trap hidden at the well and intended for the enemy. My host chuckled wickedly as he tied a string to the door latch and to the trigger of a shotgun trap that lurked between the ceiling beams. In my dreams of Margaret that night I tripped on a string.

During a hailstorm late one night we found shelter at another bachelor's cabin. Hail like hens' eggs had crushed his crop. I showed the frowning host my set of sacred mottoes. When his eye fell on one, "GOD BLESS OUR HOME," his fist fell upon it heavy and he roared: "Have you a 'GOD DAMN OUR HOME'?" He put me up for the night. In the morning he bought "THOUGH HE SLAY ME, YET WILL I TRUST IN HIM."

One week-end we made a lucky find in an English nobleman, who tilled a section of wheatland alone. He was a rank infidel; but his curses were fresh and poetic. He got his grub from Winnipeg. Eleven eggs for breakfast, eleven eggs for dinner, eleven eggs for supper, — thirty-three a day, — he cooked for me in a cast-iron frying pan with butter. A dozen tins of peaches I devoured. The leavings he fed to the gophers that swarmed on his land.

What a host he was! At mealtimes he hewed the two-by-fours along his kitchen wall to get chips for the fire. He urged me to stay a week, but I

feared his roof might ramble down. He punctured panes of a distant barn window to show me his marksmanship. His horses were within. "They are only plough horses, sir. They duck." He took me crow-hunting in the northern summer night while aurora borealis sprayed the sky. I aimed his rifle at a solitary crow that slept on a stump, and missed because my host tapped my elbow. "It can't fly," he whispered huskily. I handed back his rifle, suddenly reminded of the Ancient Mariner. He shot two on the wing.

I lodged in the cabin of a French Canadian. He could not speak English, nor could any of his children. An altar with candles and the crucified Christ, half-size, crowded the living room. At bedtime he held vespers while his wife and children and I knelt in sand on a hand-hewn floor. His two oldest had taken the veil. That night I slept on the left of the old patriarch. At dawn he awoke me for matins. He kissed me Godspeed on both cheeks as I mounted Tony. And my heart quavered with joy at the sweetness of man. Why should the good God who "loveth all" want to destroy him? That day I preached Doomsday to Tony. For a young doubt is conspicuous by its eagerness to shield an old faith.

I found an Icelandic pastor, whose noble name I could trace through the sagas down to another epoch of Western immigration one thousand years ago. He wrote me an Old Norse letter, praising

my doctor book to his flock of prosperous settlers. And they greeted me as their forefathers would a son home from a viking tour, urging me into their cabins for curd of sheep's milk cooled in deep wells, and for a long talk of my travels. Icelandic maidens in homespun hose and hand-woven clothes and soleless sheepskin shoes sang native songs. I responded by singing songs of the sea, and revival jazz of the Bowery, and Doomsday hymns of the seminary. At night the howling huskies followed me in my dreams when I was searching far and wide for Margaret.

I found a log cabin deep in the forest. The owner was a lone Norwegian woman, who spoke an old dialect that I had learned from sailors at sea. Her forehead was queenly and her hemplike hair was twisted into a heavy hawser. She was a vigorous giantess, who ploughed her own fields, cleared the timber in her coulee, and once a month drove her team to town for mail. In her young days she used to ride to town, she told me; but she had grown too heavy for her broncho. Far into the night we talked about Ibsen and Björnson, Lie and Hamsun, and about the lyric poet, Wergerland, whom she quoted from memory. She knew literature from the *Elder Edda* up. Even the work of Hans Kinck she was familiar with — the least known, and perhaps the greatest. I was charmed by her marvelous memory span and by her poetic brogue.

She gave me the right of way by going to the barn to milk her sheep. I stretched my limbs in bed and was in the midst of prayer when she returned, handing me a drink of milk, warm from the sheep's udder. "I shall not tempt thee (*Eg ska inta frista dokka*)," she said as she lay down beside me.

In the midst of my canvassing I had a "call." And I drove Tony back to Minnesota to a lumber town on the shores of Lake Superior. An old man held Doomsday meetings there. He was once a wealthy farmer, but had sacrificed his land to the Doomsday cause after having read the same book which I had peddled in Iowa. A meek Christian he was, who seven summer nights a week sounded the warning to lumberjacks, and the day long tramped the coast with his good wife, cheering the sick. Like old Simeon, "it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." On an empty lot next to the cemetery he had pitched his canvas tabernacle and his three camping tents. He called his camp the "Bible Chautauqua." There he lived, he and his wife and a younger singer, whom lumberjacks had nicknamed the "Tent Lass."

Yankee, Swede, Ojibwa, — they had all interbred, — flocked to the tent at night to hear the old saint prophesy and to hear the Tent Lass

sing. A Swede who owned the sawmill came. The Tent Lass charmed him. Morning, noon, and night he came to hear the alluring melodies flow from her lips. For she practised "voice" the day long.

I helped the tired saint a fortnight, giving the lumber town all that was in me — a dozen Doooms-day lectures according to John the Seer. The day long I lay in a hammock within the shady tabernacle, jotting down mathematics and dreaming of Margaret. In the grass at the feet of the Tent Lass the mill owner sat peering into her eyes while a rip saw down at his mill wailed, "*Y—o—u! Y—o—u!*" in loud, heartbreaking tones, accompanying the singer.

The whole town mustered out for my lectures — Yankee, Swede, Ojibwa, the conquerors of the Great West. And after each of these fire-and-brimstone meetings I took a swim at the mill-owner's bachelor bungalow. I was hot. He came to meet me in the moonlight, naked — a stocky Socrates with muscles like a sack of eels. While we swam in the deep dark lake he pestered me with his love for the Tent Lass. And he dived down with a gurgling sigh to wash away his tears. When I was about to make a search for his body he shot to the surface alive, punching a hoary shoulder into my ribs like the sandpaper tail of a shark.

That same summer the old saint dropped dead. And he was buried across the road from his Bible

Chautauqua. I had returned home. When the Tent Lass married the wealthy Swede, Margaret was at the wedding.

Our famous stoves stood ready for shipment. It had been a salubrious summer. Margaret had picked berries and had canned ten dozen quarts of fruit, packing them in frost-proof Doomsday magazines and barrels. Five hundred of the magazines she had purchased wholesale to peddle at a county fair; and she had sold exactly twenty. But during the four following winters at the State University dimes were dear. I disposed of the rest on the streets of Minneapolis.

We took a farewell ride up through Main Street together, Junior hanging on to the handlebar in front, Margaret straddling a grub box above Tony's hind wheel, and I in the saddle. We barely made the seminary hill. Gravity was no longer upside down.

The train pulled out of the depot with the three of us the only passengers, and Tony the only baggage, and our barrels and crates and sacks of new potatoes the only freight. Never before had we been so wealthy or so much in love.

VI

ALMA MATER

WE clung to a bridge rail high above the river, awed by the gliding waters and worn bluffs, and by a variety of Indian summer hues that fringed old Mississippi. A pristine setting! And the girl clinging to my arm, lithe and warm, cheeks colored by the brisk walk, eyes bedewed by early morning air, was the jewel in that setting.

But on the eastern bluffs, and above oak and elm, loomed temples and castles and palaces. There, in a primeval forest, architectures of all the ages had gathered. A heavenly messenger greeted our eyes first — the swivel dome of a mosque-like edifice, the observatory.

“More than thirty!” Margaret gasped. “How old is the U?”

Huskily: “My class is the fiftieth, if the registrar accepts me.”

Far behind us, clocks on the courthouse tower struck. With a feeling of sacrilege we flitted over the lawns as though the green campus carpet were holy ground. The solitude among the buildings

was that of an ancient, excavated city. Our hearts thumped and our eyes widened at the tomblike silence.

We came to a structure larger than a city block. Within, a queer little old man, with a ponderous head, eyes jutting and half sheltered by silver spectacles, dragged himself across the hall. He resembled an alchemist of the Middle Ages. And he smelled of ore and ovens.

"Pardon me, Professor. Is n't this the place to register?"

He sighed lugubriously between syllables, and murmured, "This is Chemistry."

We tried another building, labeled "Pharmacy," that had a fragrance like a ship laden with spices of the Orient; and a third, labeled "Pathology," that had a medicated morgue odor. They were filled with herbs and jars, but void of living beings. And we climbed the outer stairs of a steep castle, where a bulky gentleman, with freckled fists and a head saturated in tints of red, spread his arms across the doorway. He was like a sea king, heavy, swift, majestic. His frown alone blocked our passage.

"Pardon me, Professor. Is n't this the place —?" He shook his head with vigor. And his moustache turned into a tongue of fire.

Backing down, we crossed the lane and entered an ivy-covered temple, stuffy from tobacco smoke and leather chairs. Approached a sallow sage,

eagle-faced, with black eyes embedded under heavy lids and deep in their sockets. He was the picture of a shaven El Greco.

"Pardon me, Professor. Is n't this the office of the registrar?"

His eyes began to glow, but kindly. "No, sir. That's farther down the river. And — pardon me — women aren't allowed here."

Out we skipped, and hastened back under the castle of the sea king, and passed a Doric temple where we dared not intrude, and sneaked into another ivy-covered building — but not stuffy; fresh with perfume scents, and furnished with lounges and rugs, paintings and tapestries. In the midst of all the splendor Grandma smiled. "Pardon me! But men are not allowed here."

"This must be the Temple of Diana," I whispered.

"And the other one must be the Temple of Apollo," Margaret replied.

We invaded the Doric temple. And dear old Socrates wobbled out from somewhere to greet us. His bald head shone with wisdom, and a tolerant grin radiated through his wrinkles, like rays from the sun.

"Pardon me, Professor," — I almost said, "Professor Socrates," — "Could you tell us where we can find the registrar?" He eyed his watch long and pensively, and scraped a thumb nail through two Roman numerals.

"This is the place," he sang out, "but you folks got up with the janitors."

Roofed with red tile, a palace, like the King's in Copenhagen, larger, taller, more imposing than any we had seen on the campus, skirted an avenue of trees and fraternity homes. On its left wing, above a dozen granite steps, a door stood ajar. The hall was like a tunnel drilled into a marble cliff. Veins and a million minute capillaries trembled on the walls, red and yellow, green and blue, white and black, and poured an oilish sheen through the depth of the tunnel. Far away, a man dragged a duster on the floor. He greeted us with a, "Good morning, Professor!" And an echo greeted us with, "Morning, Professor!" And we both whispered: "Professor! Professor!" Each flight of stairs wound into a magic tunnel like the first. Under the roof we found a balcony, just made for two.

For a mile or two to our right old Mississippi embraced the campus. Farthest to our left rose the walls of the football field. Far in the background loomed a cluster of red, the glorious gifts of a recent legislature. Nearer at hand rose a cluster of somewhat older buildings of firmer beauty. Nearer still, repair shops and low, narrow, obsolete laboratories lay in ambush. And nearest, along a wide curve, rose a dozen grand buildings, beauty, strength, utility combined, from a dormitory at our right to a mediæval armory at our left, the

castle of the sea king and the Doric temple among them, also the Temple of Diana, where men, and the Temple of Apollo, where women, were taboo.

The massive strength of the armory held our eyes — a broad fort, with cannon facing us; and a bronze soldier headed toward a round central doorway that splayed outward in hungry layers, like an enormous safety vault; and peepholes that spiraled up along a watchtower to the turret; and smaller corner towers, resting in mid-air upon inverted cones whose curves froze into flat walls, and whose tips found foothold by prodding through angular edges.

Twice in my life sublime ecstasy has caught me, like the moon the sea: at my entrance into the New World through the Broadway canyon, and at my first glimpse of Alma Mater.

I was a crater that spewed out old lava the deeper it drank of the Pierian spring. Unlike other brisk and boyish freshmen, I began my college life a bearded fanatic, still burdened with Doomsday scruples, bent on a single aim, to save heathen souls, thrusting aside all college fun, and manœuvring myself clear of cumbersome requirements. Margaret returned from her swimming class one night. The director had asked: "Is that your husband, who told me a good story and got away with gym?" She went to a dance. A cadet captain asked: "Is that your husband, who got

released from drill because he licked my company when it tried to shave him?"

Dreamlike, the days rushed by, embryonic and hazy, suddenly filled with violent vicissitudes, then finding a clearer focus which oriented me in the world of intellectuals. I was like a babe, dizzy with new learning, bewildered in a world of giants, overwhelmed at my elders' skill and wisdom. And another childhood vanished, full and fast, like my first and second.

The time element of these fruitful days has vanished too. My freshman and senior years overlap. For I was intensely busy throughout, striving to catch up with my class work, toiling at odd jobs to earn the daily bread, and, hardest of all, attuning myself, socially, to the world of Alma Mater.

As scholastic standards go, I was a brilliant failure. My curve was broad and flat. I was a "B-F" student. Yet to-day, as I glance through my academic record, I cannot but pat myself on the back at a steady advance — with no danger, however, of getting a hump. English was alluring. I resolved that I would learn to speak and read and write the tongue of Alma Mater. And English lifted me farthest up the alphabet — from a dubious D in freshman Rhetoric to a C in sophomore Public Speaking, to a B in junior Short Story, and to a single solitary A in senior Seminar in Writing; from a D in English Survey to C's in Shakespeare,

Spenser, Chaucer, and The English Novel, and to B's in Anglo-Saxon and The Free-Verse Poets. I find no rise in my marks in chemistry and biology, — B's throughout, — nor in my marks in philosophy and psychology, French and Greek, — C's throughout. But in sociology I advanced from C's to B's. German proved the only exception. From D's in my freshman year, I slumped down to an F in my senior year.

A grind, and a capricious one, I plodded through the studies that drew my heart, and skimmed lightly over the rest. My drawings for biology eclipsed illustrations in the textbook, but at quizzes and finals my memory was blocked. Ugly Latin names clogged my larynx. Biology, however, was *the* great revelation of Alma Mater. That, and my new tongue. Biology showed me the narrow path of life between the two extremes — an amœba and a pickled nigger babe. I found a thousand evolutionary mile-posts along the path, while I dissected specimens, and collated the embryonic growth of higher vertebræ with lower phyla, and exposed a dozen apish vestiges on my own body, from the tiny "Darwin's point" of my ears to drops of blood from my punctured thumb.

A venerable entomologist who his life long had made a study of the western plant-louse told me that I should make a fine biologist. He was fond of me, and often passed my drawings of dissected lice out among the students. How zealously I

watched my own image within the ganglia, glands, stomach, and muscles of a little louse! How desirous I was to start in pursuit of an oxygen atom, as it rode into my nostrils and down my lungs upon the breath of life, through all its epic escapades, till it sped out through my mouth upon the breath of death. For that was the whole secret of life. And the ride was still too swift for science.

But the silver tongue of Alma Mater charmed me away from science. In class I sat enchanted by its beauty, feeding on voices of the living and gloating on gestures of the dead. The *word* floated into my veins through my eyes, ears, and larynx. How it did stir my feelings, in there! And this was a deeper mystery still than the ride of the atom. A thousand hours of rarest joy, with not a single one of ennui!

But once was I aroused unpleasantly: in a class of three men, brave and true, and one hundred and fifty co-eds, where an illustrious poet and critic — the one who once, in public, to my childish delight, staked his reputation as a prophet on calling me a *rara avis*, and better — lectured on Tolstoy, dwelling at length on the saint's doctrine of continence. Tolstoy piqued me, and does yet. And I interrupted: How was it that Tolstoy was the father of thirteen children? Didn't he practise what he preached? Or was his wife disloyal? Or was it the immaculate conception again?

While science cleared my eyes, rhetoric went

deeper and cleared my throat. I still believe, naïvely perhaps, that writing a new tongue, like voice culture, takes place somewhere between the lips and the diaphragm. Words were names of things. And a good name was as good as the thing itself. It was a passion with me to spend half a night searching my dictionary for good names, writing and rewriting a paragraph, smoothing over an uneven surface, weeding out surplusage, whitening off abstractions, till the word became flesh. I had seen young artists wipe out a brush stroke thirty times. And writing a new tongue was a trial-and-error method too, a concoction of words patiently selected and combined, tasted on the tip of the tongue with thirty gobbles at least, till the paragraph floated down the throat into my blood like smooth liqueur.

Not that I attained anywhere the skill of my teachers! Alas — no! But I was a babe, immensely proud of my babble. And I did create a world within myself by juggling the vocabulary — a world of words that stirred my inner tissue.

My new tongue became entrancing, like religion. I wore a dictionary to shreds, as I had formerly my Bible. Spelling and grammar were bad. The idiom still refuses to enter my blood. But a college periodical patched up and published my themes. And one noon at chapel I received a silver cup with my name engraved, the only honor I ever attained at college, unless perhaps it be my

membership in the Kawa Club of writers and — I almost forgot — a sharpshooter medal I won with a rusty rifle.

On the strength of that cup I joined the seminar where seven students worked at poems, plays, and stories, and each week spent a private hour or two at the desk of the master. One hundred hours, at least, of poignant joy did he grant me, cutting into my lines trenchantly, like a skilled surgeon.

But writing was a luxury which I could not afford. I chose for my life work the field of sociology — a supple compromise between the literary arts and the medical mission field, both of which still pull at my heart. And — life is, indeed, sweet — so do biology, X-ray research, mathematics, and — oh ! the sea, most of all.

I had a glimpse at the medical field all through my years at college. For I knew the keeper of the Hennepin County morgue. Many a rare autopsy have I watched. The coroner snapped off a man's or woman's ribs with tongs and pliers, and with his butcher knife sliced vitals to bits. He scooped entrails with his bare fingers. His young assistant folded the scalp, as he would a sleeve cuff, sawed off the skullcap neatly, pried the brains loose, shoved me gently aside to get elbow room, and from the depth of the empty skull pulled out a gland, bone-socket and all. I lighted him another cigar while he buried brains and all in the abdominal cavity. He returned the skullcap to its

owner, and with an index finger slipped the scalp in place again. The other day I read the results of his researches in an X-ray journal.

Shortage of money shut me out of the medical field, and I turned to sociology, applied and pure. Seventeen theories showed me the methods of healing social ills. I diagnosed society, and filled out prescriptions. Criminology, juvenile delinquency, child welfare, called for workers — a new profession which was hitched to all the arts and sciences, and which later took me to Manhattan for graduate studies, into prisons and criminal courts, hospitals for the insane and schools for the feeble-minded, in an optimistic attempt to lift the underworld.

We lived on the western bluff of the river, in a dilapidated house that was owned by a fat Falstaffian Jew. Each month we looked forward to his visit, especially when I was broke; for I could always borrow a dollar or two from our jolly landlord. Beside Paradise Alley, he owned hovels in the slums. In high-pitched whispers he told us the scandals of the Ghetto, and about his fire business with police and insurance company.

Two farm students "batched it" in our best room, and paid half the rent. We ourselves slept, ate, and cooked in the kitchen. And there was no privacy, for the roomers entered their room and departed through the kitchen, and shared our sink. We strung a sheet between that sink and our cot.

There they scraped their frying pan at midnight and scrubbed their teeth before dawn.

Peculiar people lived in Paradise Alley. Below us lived a Serbian couple and their brood, whom the mother flogged with a cat-o'nine. How the Serbian mother blessed us that crisp Christmas morn when our roomers sat on our sink, watching Margaret roast their chicken ! The sink tumbled down, and the water pipe burst, and the flat below turned into an ice palace before I had time to plug the leak with a broom handle. I shall never forget the spring christenings in that flat. One singularly long hour a beady-eyed Serb babe lay kicking in my hands, above a tub of water, naked as the day it was born, while sweat rolled down my brow, and a Greek priest prayed, and candles, stuck into beer bottles, oozed, and a railroad gang of husky Serbs surveyed Margaret.

Next flat to ours lived two squirming seamstresses, who watched Junior and "Copperfield" at night when Margaret went to her classes and I was working. During hot summer nights we shared a rickety porch with them and their cats — some of which I donated, secretly, to the grateful College of Medicine. Only one of the maidens snored, the long, masculine-looking one — "the one with feathers on her feet," Junior called her: he meant hair. She rolled off the porch one night and down the yard, cluttering the morale of her toe phalanges.

Across the street a sick woman, with a sot of a man and several half-grown daughters, died in Margaret's arms. In another house lived a staggering wreck of a woman, whom she often helped to the campus dispensary for a blood test and injections. And she nursed a young Irish neighbor through her bi-annual miscarriages. Next house lived a thieving squatter family, who tore down our porch for fuel, piece by piece. There a lone beggar woman lived and disappeared. I helped the police break into her flat where, on a filthy floor, we found her, dead, beside a heavy purse.

I remember a Doomsday couple in the "haunted house" next to ours, a quiet and gentle carpenter, who bought, rebuilt, and lost that house, and his frail wife, who was the mother of six-toed twins. The man had a thorn in his flesh. He claimed that the moon affected his mood. The twins came up to us one wintry night at full moon. "Papa's throwing dishes!" I leaped out of bed and down across the yard, barefoot, bearded, wild-haired, and in my bathrobe. At sight of me he ran. Down Paradise Alley he fled, like a madman. He had taken me for Christ, he told me. That night I shaved off my beard.

Social workers dined in our kitchen, and consulted Margaret on behalf of their clients. She was the angel of Paradise Alley. They all came to her with their troubles. She fetched clothes for their urchins from the Sunshine Society, where she had

“pull,” where dear Miss Blanchard gave her exquisite waists and lingerie and hiking suits of good quality — hardly worn — for her own use, and even shoes small enough to fit her foot. She was ingenious, and remodeled the finery to fit her form. And she was dressed as neatly, as stylishly, as any co-ed.

The Sunshine Society found me a preacher's outfit, and, when I grew worldly, a Tuxedo. But I had already found myself a plainer place for clothes, the County morgue. I needed an overcoat — my last was lost in Chicago. The keeper gave me one, which Margaret only the other day came across, finding a bean sandwich hidden in a roomy pocket. How many thousand have I not carried to the campus in that pocket! Each year I procured suits at the morgue, repaying the keeper by painting his bungalow, and helping him answer telephone calls on the day of April Fool, and once defending him in public, when a newspaper slandered him. I fumigated the morgue clothing in a drygoods box, and washed it in gallons of gasoline, and aired it thoroughly — but not at night, for then it vanished. I was fastidious in my choice, and looked for well-dressed strangers, young and unclaimed, though less eagerly than for bones in my childhood. Tramps and suicides I passed up.

Our fuel I fetched from old Mississippi, — save kerosene for cooking, — climbing down the bluffs in winter, and with axe and chisel split logs that lay

stranded on and frozen to spits in the river. Dripping with sweat, nostrils clogged with icicles, I dragged our winter fuel home on Tony, a score of cords, at least, costing not a penny.

The second winter was our hardest. And at Christmas time I went to a Salvation Army camp, to earn a goose. The Captain's recruits were on the streets, keeping vigil over Christmas kettles, and I helped her pack baskets for the poor. She pinned a beautiful ribbon on my cap, and sent me into the slums with the baskets. And she gave me not only a goose, but fruit and vegetables, a secondhand "BB" gun, or air rifle, for Junior, and a bear for David. And she gave me a two-dollar bill beside, which was all the money I owned in the world.

But, alas! What a child I was that Christmas Eve, wandering through Nicolet Avenue to find Margaret a gift! I could find nothing beautiful enough. Instead, I found a Danish tramp, with livid lips and bleary eyes, a stubby beard, and a jailbird bob. He waved me a "*Glædelig Jul!*" (Merry Christmas) and vanished inside a saloon, to sip his twenty hookers.

Churches fissure till some become too small to feed a minister. In such I preached on Sunday, at the rate of one sermon for five or three for ten dollars. The frugal farmers in the city outskirts relished the ideas I imbibed at college, tales of the sea, and, at the finish, five minutes of solemn admonition.

Praying was my only difficulty. I could not acquire the holy tone. I could sing as loud as the loudest, and could splatter my sermon through a gamut of dramatic action. Margaret said that, when I prayed, I sounded as if I were chatting with the grocer.

Biology put an end to my preaching, and I found a job as janitor in the morgue-keeper's church. One night each week I washed the church floor. And while the pastor preached I sat in the cellar, stuffing birchwood into a furnace that smoked, and reading *The Age of Reason*. On rare occasions I filled a tank behind the pulpit with lukewarm water, and steam from the hot-water faucet enwrapped the pastor in clouds. Once the water was too hot. A flock of lovely virgins stood waiting at the tank, clad in academic robes with lead sinkers sewn along the lower seam. The pastor walked the aisle in rubber boots, not in the best of humors, for the cold-water faucet was frozen. Whenever I drained that tank the cellar became flooded, for there was no drain pipe. And the tank bottom slanted, and, of course, the drain plug was at the wrong end. The Sabbath long I scooped. Once the water was too cold: a sister caught pneumonia. And the pastor fired me.

During a night shift, I worked in a tractor factory, among heavy chain-conveyors and automatic lathes. The ocean roar of these, and the finer overtones of tools that dug into steel, like teeth of

snarling beasts, and oil gurgling, and chucks whirling, and high pressure air-hose sniffing, caught my ear like a jungle in the South Seas. It was piece work. Heavy forgings crawled along the chain-conveyor. These I hurled into the chuck of my lathe, whose teeth tore heavy spiral shavings off their hard body. The pay of that fortnight settled a six months' grocery bill.

I tried my luck at hack writing, and measured my stuff with a ruler. I still treasure a letter of apology from a newspaper editor, who had paid me for a string of 482, instead of 573 inches. I started a business of my own, making multiplying dials for children, and only lost seventy dollars. Somewhere, in an old garage out there, a ton of colored cardboard dials is still stored.

Some nights we were penniless, without a bite of bread. Then I fetched a bundle of old Doomsday magazines, and peddled these among pedestrians. I returned with a handful of dimes, and with pocketfuls of canned food and other morsels, even stockings and handkerchiefs, which I had bartered in the stores.

At the Chamber of Commerce I made statistical graphs for a year book. And at a printing firm's I did some drafting for a catalogue, jamming the front, side, and top view of future machinery — still only on blueprint — into perspectives, which I then shaded with brush and diluted ink till they looked like photographs. And I found a job in a

furnace factory, far from the campus, designing torches for snow-melting, weed-burning, asphalt heating; core-ovens for foundries; and — for steel mills — crude-oil furnaces, large enough to swallow a railroad car. I even drew a melting furnace to sample a dozen sacks of gold ore, and watched a drop of fluid gold roll from the furnace spout into an old prospector's fur cap.

I found work nearer the campus, shoveling snow for the street department; tutoring an old woman in the first reader, until one day she exploded and tore her book to pieces; typing themes at four cents a hundred words; tutoring co-eds in mathematics and physics; cutting lawns and washing windows for the faculty.

I hired out as scullery maid to the State of Minnesota. In the pitchy morning hours, before the breakfast rush, I hiked across old Mississippi to the college kitchen, where the manager watched me for fear that I might steal her pancakes. But Lena, my partner, liked me. And many a morning the trusted old maid smuggled a dish into my corner. Dog-like, I gobbled down the steaming pancakes. One morning she stumbled. She was always in a hurry. She stumbled with a basin of scalding water. One more week she stood beside me in the scullery before she fainted. I brought her roses before blood poison took her. And I carried one end of her bier.

On the campus I found a job, at last, which

paid me well, and allotted me a wealth of knowledge beside. Professional thieves had stolen the platinum dishes in the chemistry department. In the biology department the freshmen stole hand lenses and dissecting instruments. And in the college of medicine a kleptomaniac, who was also a scientific genius, supplied his home laboratory with a number of pieces of rare apparatus. The yearly loss was not known.

I stamped and stenciled, inked and painted, carved, etched, and branded, a number upon every piece of University property. I marked a hundred thousand instruments, from frail electroscopes to giant dynamos, etching glass thermometers with fluoric acid; surgical apparatus with *aqua regia*; numbering huge telescopes and hundreds of microscopes with brush and ceruse; stamping wood and metal parts with dies. I marked cages on the roofs of the college of medicine, while mongrels snarled. I numbered the entire collection of animal species in the biology laboratories — thousands and thousands — the nigger babe, too. At the college of agriculture I tagged hogs and chickens, stamped the stallion's hoof, and pinched metal tags into ears of prize bulls and sows.

I ransacked and labeled more than sixty college buildings, and learned the nicknames of as many janitors, and came to know the clerks and mechanics and faculty men and women. Late one night I all but scared the life out of my beloved pro-

fessor, in his private laboratory. Co-eds fled in their kimonas, when I came with dauber and blacking to stencil dormitory rugs and mattresses. A million numbers, more or less, I left at Alma Mater. The kleptomaniac became a barber apprentice.

Down the banks of old Mississippi sped our sleigh. Junior got lost in a tilt.

"Mother!" he shouted.

"Quit yer kiddin'! She's yer sis!" someone yelled on a toboggan.

I bought him roller skates the day the assistant loan clerk handed me one hundred "bucks." He and Margaret wore them out on the asphalt of Murphy Park. In our kitchen we punctured empty fruit jars with his "BB" gun. During spring and summer Tony afforded us many a pleasant ride along the winding river lane to Minnehaha and Fort Snelling. Even soft and chubby David, who had come from Brooklyn, found room on Tony. Tony could stand still and balance the whole family on his two wheels; and he rode steadily, even when I took my hands off his handlebars.

One Sunday morning we took a ride north, along an automobile trail. The lovely spring Nature lured us out. And we camped at a little sapphire lake, hidden in the spruce woods. Junior begged me for a swim. And while he clung to my neck in deep water, and David watched Tony, Margaret came wading out to us, more nymphish than the

day she posed for our artist friends in Brooklyn. "Look, Daddy! Mother forgot to leave her bonnet ashore." The fun we had in that lake! But our consternation, when we swam to shallow water! Just as our feet touched bottom, two peeping co-eds snapped us. I have the film before me; for I held up the naughty girls, and I stole their kodak — returning it, of course, but empty. Twice, already, the Sunday papers had featured us. We dreaded a third time. For we were naked.

When prosperity came we crossed the Mississippi to live within a block of the campus. There Junior went to school with faculty children. Summer and winter he and his playmates roamed through the spacious campus castles. One Sunday he got stuck in a peephole on the six-foot-thick walls of Pillsbury Hall. Someone summoned the fire department. If I failed to find him at bedtime he was in the armory, cleaning rifles for cadets, or under the seats on the football field, playing Robin Hood. One Saturday a dismal football team daubed his face, and, in a wheelless baby carriage, dragged him through the campus, as the Gopher Jinx. One Saint Patrick's day he and the grandchildren of Cyrus Northrup played hooky from school. They said that they had been kidnapped during the engineers' parade, and made to crawl within a little red schoolhouse on wheels. He must have acted the bad boy well, that chilly day; for he caught a year of laryngitis.

Margaret, likewise, found herself at home in her new environment. There was the Mothers' Club at the public school, and there was the Dames' Club of students' wives, sponsored by faculty women. And there were the co-eds' week-end parties, which she chaperoned, while I and the boys batched it. How the girls loved to have her chaperone them !

I was slower than Junior and Margaret. Yet my social growth was really greater than my scholastic and economic. The honor system played some havoc with my social growth. At a German quiz, my first college chum, a mature and married preacher, cribbed shamefully. He was later expelled from the college of medicine. In chemistry almost the whole class cheated at monthly quizzes. What was the use of tattling ? I wrote my pledge on the back of my quiz paper, and not too cheerfully : "I have neither given nor received aid in this examination, nor seen or heard anyone else give or receive aid."

Students pilfering scissors and scalpels in freshman biology shocked me as much as sacrilegious church thieves. I boiled with righteous indignation — somewhat pharisaically, though, since I probably stole as many dollars' worth of pancakes in the college kitchen as any freshman stole of dissecting instruments. All State property I regarded as sacred, save those pancakes.

Yet golden friendships grew out of my under-

graduate years. "All, all are gone, the old, familiar faces." Sigurd and Gudrun are building highways in China. Cora is teaching in the Philippines. Harold forsook the work which he loved, and made his million in bonds. Lorna's first novel brought her fame. Of two brilliant Marxians, one is a professor of economics, the other is still starving on the stump. Mary is writing stories for the *Atlantic*. Madeline, the playwright, Marion, the social worker, Monica, the actress, Muriel, the poetess, are happily married.

And my friends of the Orient — the Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Indian students! Back to Asia they went to spread the Gospel of science. We ate Hindu dinners, Margaret and I, cooked by a real Brahman, long-haired, his head swathed in silks. And we had tea, kneeling on mats, at the sons-of-mandarins'. And at a Japanese baron's, with a gold-embroidered coat of arms on his kimona, we had midnight supper and a brew made up of forbidden fruit.

On Christmas Eve Prexy's wife gathered the foreign students at her home. Haitian straw skirts and Philippine curtain dresses mingled with Hardanger bridal waists and gorgeous Turkish veils. Lacquered Russian high boots, runty sandals of the Orient, and red hose and snouted wooden shoes of old Denmark danced the floor together. We sang "Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht," which I happened to know better than the Germans, and,

“Allons, enfants de la patrie,” which a Norwegian dentist co-ed — who the same winter committed suicide — finished when the French gave up; and, “My country ’tis of thee,” which a lovely maiden, half Chinese and about three-quarters Irish, carried the prize on, and songs of many other nations. But the eats were the best of all. Two dainty sandwiches for the boys found their way into my pocket, while I winked an eye at Margaret, who was chatting with Prexy.

I made social blunders that taught me many a painful lesson. There was a faculty tea, with a slice of lemon and half a cracker, where I asked a white-haired woman whether the young instructor, her namesake, who was entertaining Margaret, were not her son? I really wanted to give her a compliment, for I believed that he was her grandson. She patted my hand kindly. “Don’t be alarmed. It’s only my husband.” There was the dancing party at Cora’s, where sweet Cathleen threw a book at me for launching a religious debate. There was a picnic at the river banks, where I stuck fire to a pile of brush that burned the co-eds’ wraps. There was a cosmopolitan banquet, where someone introduced me to a well-known woman tennis player, and I made a slip of the tongue: “Allow me to kiss your famous ankle” — meaning “wrist,” of course. That “w” always played me a trick. It prodded my tongue like the barb of a fishhook. I forgot names that began with that

letter. I stuttered at all the interrogative pronouns. And not until I found my own inner world did I pull out the barb.

There were dinners at the homes of my college chums, once with a rabbi who took us to his synagogue to show us a rare papyrus scroll, the Hebrew Bible, written by hand. No human hand had ever touched that sacred scroll, not even the finger of the writer; only its ebony handles — not until I stroked it superstitiously, and with gasping thrill, for Yahweh might strike me dead on the spot. And there was a wealthy woman, a leader in society, who took me to her bedroom, where she pulled off her shoes and stockings, showing me her naked feet, deformed by footwear. I fled at the sight and misconstrued her intention, fool that I was. She only wanted to impart an object lesson. For I smoked too much. Folly might wreck my health, as it had her feet.

But there were ideal socials also — weekly programmes of cellos, violins, peanuts, and chocolates, in a hidden nook at the “Oak Tree”; downtown symphonies and operas — when we could sponge tickets; quaint fortnightly gatherings of the Philosophy Club; beer parties of the Kawa Club; stormy sessions of the Seekers’ Club, where we were chaperoned by the dearest of deans, who more than once saved me from dishonorable discharge at Alma Mater, and who no less than six times helped me obtain tuition scholarships; and a Sandburg

luncheon, where a charming hostess sat between me and the great Chicagoan, "because I was one of his first discoverers in America."

I loved the American home, cozy and artistic in its simplicity, with an atmosphere of liberal — never orthodox and seldom radical — thought, and above all, glowing with kind and quiet humor. That was the greatest thing I found at college — the homes of Alma Mater. They made me American.

Before I graduated I became a citizen. Previous to my oath of allegiance in the United States District Court I was summoned to the office of the district attorney to be quizzed. And if I had known the answer to his first query, "How many stars are there in the flag?" I might have escaped a grueling ordeal. But I did not. And he began to notice me.

"How many stripes?" he asked. I shook my head. The tall gentleman eyed me sharply. "Have you ever seen an American flag?" I whispered a faint "Yes," looking through the tail of my eye in hope of seeing the Stars and Stripes displayed. "Do you close your eyes when you see a flag?" he asked unmercifully. "I—I—get such a patriotic thrill that I forget to count," I blurted out indignantly. "You do? Tell me the colors of the flag." I gave the correct answer. "What color are the stars?" I thought a moment. I was confused. My two witnesses, a Norwegian grocer

and a German professor, turned red. "Blue." The district attorney lifted his brow ever so lightly. "B-l-u-e! And you're a senior at the State University!" As if Alma Mater were to blame!

Then began a humiliating quiz. "How many colonies were there before the Federation?" Alas! I did not understand his question. I hated all the words that ended in "tion." I had never looked that word up, though I had read it once or twice. "There was first one — but as time went on, colonies grew popular — so they began to increase in number." There was a long pause. My German professor looked as shamefacedly at me as he used to do in class. "How many were there finally?" I shook my head wearily. "How many States have we now in the Union?" Again I shook my head. "Well, guess! Make a guess!" I tried to count them on my eyelids. That was the way I always did mental arithmetic. "There are more than thirty-six," I answered. "Quite right! In fact, there are more than forty-six. What's the capital of Pennsylvania?" That was easy. "Pittsburg," I answered quickly. "P-i-t-t-s-b-u-r-g!" He had a bright idea.

"What's the capital of Minnesota?" I gave the correct answer, and his jaw drooped.

Another fifteen minutes, and he asked: "Tell me, my boy, what did you learn at college?"

I grew panic-stricken, lest my academic record should be displayed in court.

"I learned to speak, read, and write my new tongue," I replied with conviction. "And I learned to love America above all other nations."

The following weeks I memorized the history of America, from Leif Ericson to Woodrow Wilson. I knew the births and deaths of all the Presidents. I learned not only the capitals of states, but also the cities, towns, and hamlets; and I knew how many stars and stripes there were in the flag, and why. Yet, when I was summoned to court, smooth-shaven like a Yankee, and the first one to be called before the judge, I eyed the district attorney, beside the bench, tremblingly.

The court was crowded. His shrewd eyes rested on me a moment. A sudden glint stabbed into my heart. But without asking a single question he addressed the judge in a solemn drawl: "This young man, your Honor, is a senior at the State University." The learned judge scrutinized me over his glasses. Unexpectedly he shouted through the quiet courtroom: "Accepted!" I gave a startled jerk. Then a warm thrill ran down my neck, and I felt my heart expand. The clerk hammered a mallet on his table, and sang out: "Court, arise!" A shuffling of heavy immigrant feet, and a tomblke silence! I lifted my hand and was sworn in.

Then came the day which every college student looks forward to with longing and also with wist-

ful regrets. Clad in academic gowns, we walked around the campus knoll in solemn procession, passing the row of familiar castles and temples and palaces. On the broad steps of the Doric temple Socrates stood leaning against a massive column and on his broom, a little older and paler, but still wearing his tolerant grin and waving his cap. He looked at me and shook his head equivocally, as he had done the day of our last religious dialogue. The sea king, more bulky than ever, stood on the steep steps of his castle, his huge arms spread across the doorway, frowning. I had long ago forgiven him his meanness in puncturing Tony's tires to break me of the habit of stalling him inside the sea castle. "Hello, Carl Christian!"

"Hello, Red!"

El Greco and the now almost senile Alchemist stood leaning on a pair of grass-cutters, outside the "Temple of Apollo." The same silver spectacles were still trying to cover the eyes of the old Finn. El Greco's clear ironic drawl reached my ear: "Hey, there, you inventory clerk! Glad to see you graduate! Glad to see you go!" The machinist of Physics leaned over his lathe and waved a hand through a basement window. "Just talked with yer missus and kids!" he yelled at the procession. I pointed a questioning finger at the armory, and he nodded his head with emphasis. The laboratory technician of Botany came by, a German bachelor with a scar on his ruby nose,

cane in hand, field glasses, and a grass-green case swinging from his shoulders. He was whistling "Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten." As I hailed him, he stopped abruptly. His glassy eyes found me and beamed.

The long procession marched through the vault-like doorway of the armory. The stage was crowded with men in lustrous gowns, scholars whose work was known throughout the globe. I watched my bosom cronies climb the stage, one by one, to receive their foolscap, a future judge, a poet, a great orator, a philosophic prodigy, young giants, all of them.

Margaret and the boys waved from the gallery. She had had faith in the sea rover, from the time he first rented her mother's garret. A mere child, she had left her kin and friends to roam the West with her mate. My thoughts returned to our entrance into the world of wisdom. We had seen the birth of prehistoric man, and had played with philosophies of ancient dream children, and we had watched the truth of science and the beauty of art begin to make man free. We had, indeed, lived a full eternity with Alma Mater.

As I waved back to Margaret and the boys, David called out, "Daddy," in his clear contralto baby voice. The eyes of a thousand smiling graduates paid their tribute to my wife. Margaret almost swooned with emotion, she told me later.

VII

HARVEST

I STARTED my life work a romantic uplifter, bent on one heroic task: to shoulder the underworld and raise it out of the drainage level. But I soon discovered that the secret passage to the underworld led through the hearts of its dwellers, pauper, half-wit, madman, criminal — all of whom I found plentifully in the years that followed. To lift the underworld I must first break through the inner world of man. To do that, I must find the inner world. And I knew not how to enter. For the older psychology had failed to solve the kinship between mind and body, as had theology the trinity of body, soul, and spirit.

Deep in the western woods I had found antlers, bleached by suns of many summers, the remains of two undaunted bull-moose locked in the death grip. But man was fiercer than moose. He fought not only with his rival, but with himself and with beast and with God. He tried to stretch eternity by digging himself downward to the beast and by building upward to God — building the tower of Babel, leaping ahead of life to

live future lives, returning to younger days beyond birth, beyond the cogging of parental chromosomes, beyond mutation of beast and bird, æons further down, beyond the beginnings of life, to pristine mud and meteoric dust, back to the oldest star cloud, back to absolute zero.

I had no magic lamp at my command to help me find the antechambers of the underworld, nor a host of supernatural servants, as had the heroes of myth and fairy tale. But I thrust old theories aside and set out on new quests. And whether I were locked up with a ward of insane or with a prison hall of murderers, or I taught handicraft to a class of feeble-minded children, or I was trailing a fiend the night long through the haunts of Manhattan, badge on my chest, gun and blackjack on my hip, I found the same clue common to all living things, man as well as beast: a wild urge for food and for love, to keep his flesh and his kind alive.

They laid their hearts bare to me, these children did, some tougher than sots and harlots, others demure like old seers, some dull and dying, others overflowing with life and sparkling with wit. They soared or sank to undreamed heights and depths of passion, and burned with fears and rages, joys and sorrows. I peered into their eyes. Something real was hidden within, but as far away as the Devil down beneath the sea and God behind the stars.

The loves and hungers of these children of the

underworld rushed in torrents down the mountain slope, or rose in subtle vapors to the heights, or wrung floating flames like thunderclouds out of nature's heart. They revealed the naked, undisguised animal. And their divine lust for life was stronger, more charming, more eternal than the ghostly "soul" and "spirit" of my early teachers, that supposedly lay hidden in the caves of the human body, there to be smoked out like foxes, or to be released by a bullet or a whiff of potassium cyanide, or to take flight in the open by a cave-in — haunting, homeless abstractions, like the mosquito shadows which this moment scrawl mystic curves beside my pencil.

The tester of intelligence, the psychoanalyst, and the behaviorist, were just beginning to claim a hearing. They perhaps might have a talisman or a charm formula to goad me on from cave to cave within the human flesh, till I reached the ante-chambers of the underworld. A tall Tennessean, however, the shooting instructor at Manhattan police headquarters, — and not Binet or Freud or John B. Watson, — was my first teacher.

"Remember this," he said; "your best friend in the world is your six-shooter. Keep it clean. Don't let it rust. Take out the bullets each day and wipe the sweat off them. Treat your best friend well. He'll fail you if you don't, that last second of your life when you need him. And don't ever shoot while you're on the run. Stand

still. Take aim at your man's back or chest. Never at his legs. They're hard to hit."

That was at least one way of getting under the skin of man. He taught me a few jujutsu tricks that all but broke my bones. And I showed him one that sluiced his furor. Through the shooting gallery eddied echoes from his and about my evolutionary ancestry.

"You — son — of a —— !" he sibilated.

My first job was to find four young rogues. A child was pregnant and in the custody of the Children's Court of Brooklyn — a madonna-like moron with a pensive poker face, innocent eyes, and Mona Lisa lips that sealed more than they revealed. The doctor's statement and the date of the crime did not jibe. And my chief advised me to interrogate her. A matron at the detention home for children ushered her into the visiting parlor.

"Were there eight boys, or only seven?" I asked with sympathy. Gross exaggerations, shot out at random, seldom failed to wing a flighty lie.

"Only four that night," she replied, lifting her eyes from her needlework. I jotted down clues and asked her whether the boys were drunk.

"No, they was n't drunk, none of them. They treated me to soda." She began her needlework again, slightly indignant.

"Before or after?" I asked.

She whispered a simple, equivocal, "Yes." Then I suggested some imaginary tryst that she might

have had with three or four other boys earlier in the "spooning season." "Whoever told you that is a liar," she retorted, without raising her eyes from her work. "There was only two." No, she didn't remember the exact time of those early trysts. And without dates the law was futile. "You think I mark the calendar?" she mused, and arched her eyebrows.

The same afternoon I found the first culprit. The tall Tennessean had said, "Have your gun in your coat pocket and your finger on the trigger when you enter a house to make an arrest." I was prepared for a fracas with a fierce desperado; instead I found a trembling youth, scared out of his wits.

"She tells me that you were with her twenty times," I fibbed. My chief had told me that unless he confessed it would be useless to arrest him; for the law required corroborative evidence.

"She lies," he replied with conviction. "I was with her only once. We were four fellows. That was the only time." He confessed the details, and I took him to the nearest precinct to be held for bail and court arraignment.

Later in the day I found the other three, scoring four clear-cut convictions. But I was disappointed. My prisoners were not fiends at all, but rather healthy, hard-working boys from good homes. Their parents' pleadings almost made me commit perjury. Their future rested on my shoul-

ders, for their veracity would send them to Sing Sing. And I was a special officer of the law.

They leaned against the bars of the precinct cells, staring dumbly at me. I handed each a cigarette.

"Will it get in the papers?" one whispered.

"I hope not!" exclaimed a youth of an old American family.

"You think we 'll all go up the river?" inquired a third, his cheeks burning with shame.

"I 'll marry her," consoled the "Guinea Kid," "and we 'll all get freed."

Gloomily I left the precinct to write out the court complaint.

On the ferry from Red Hook the other day I came across a young, well-dressed woman, wistful and pensive. She greeted me and showed me some embroidery.

"I get two bucks apiece — No, I don't have to buy nothing of the linen — Sure, I can always get work from them swell ladies uptown — Yes, Ma has the baby. She got one herself about that time. Them look like twins. Them are both her kids."

She held to my coat sleeve as the ferry slid against the greasy bumper spiles at Manhattan. Her attractive poker face softened. "Mister! How are them four guys what got me — ?"

I checked her by holding a finger to my lips and shaking my head. The crowd was closing in on us.

Day and night I was after the offender of "one of these little ones." I gathered clues and legal evidence; sleuthed males and females of all ages, cultures, races; wrote odious court complaints that made many a fine old magistrate blush; testified in courts; snatched children out of secret brothels; and found foundling homes for swaddled tots that had been deserted in public or in solitary places.

There were baby farms where infants starved and died for lack of care, and where the greedy claw of the proprietress held on to unmarried mothers. And there were children lost along the water front — barge children, when during school hours tugboats vanished with their homes; or on long river runs of the tugboat and its flotilla of barges, when they raced from barge to barge along taut, thrumming hawsers; or during days of summer, when steamers stifled every harbor nook and they dived and swam with other urchins of the water front; or during ice jams in the cold of winter, when they played pirates on the ice floes of the harbor. Blue-eyed, hemp-haired boys and girls they were, growing up along steep steamer hulls, with the Manhattan skyline hovering in constant view, at night cuddling up in barge bunkers within the shed, the envy of their playmates ashore.

And there were runaway children hiding in the great city. I remember a charming Boston flapper whose refinement and soft voice and exquisite

clothes duped the keenest sleuth. This child whispered a secret in my ear and blushed.

"You know, Mr. Sherlock, I 'm really a boy."

"Where did you stay last night?" I asked this undaunted Buster Brown in the doctor's office.

"A man took me to his hall room, and — and — he slapped my cheek. I cried and ran down into the street to a policeman."

I verified his answers later. "And where did you stay the night before?"

And he smiled coyly as he fingered his sister's lingerie. "I told a young couple that I had lost my train. They took me to their home. Hubby slept on a lounge in the dining room. And — and — my hostess gave me a nightgown. She said: 'How flat your chest is, honey!'"

There were young mothers who lived with a mutual husband in the same home, the one nursing the children and the other running a store. But if such unions were rare, polyandric ones were not uncommon — a mother managing the home of her children's fathers. The then district attorney counseled me to ignore bigamy cases, or solve them out of court. Their number was legion. That was the day I asked him for advice about a handsome German janitor who had married both of his landladies, "to give his children a name." His two spouses were already wed, and they were neither widows nor divorcées.

Homes of filth, crime, insanity, I patched up

the best I knew how, or wrecked to salvage the children. In a musty, underground basement a laborer lived with his young, demented wife and a flock of ragged children. How these shivering urchins loved their mother! She was such fun! The day long she crawled on the floor, over a heap of coke and a pile of harbor driftwood, wearing her knees and knuckles down to the raw bone, riding her little ones "the long way to Heaven." I finally took her away — and that day a cop saved my life from her husband's stiletto. She returned, cured. And to-day this family owns a home.

But much of my patchwork failed completely. I remember a Norse longshoreman, a widower, whose food was mainly whiskey. He knew Nietzsche by heart, and he chid me with many a tart quotation on my visits. His daughter went to the devil under our eyes. His boys grew delinquent and are now in city homes. He himself fell down a stairway one night and broke his neck.

It was social surgery or biologic pruning of an organism that sprouted with vestiges and trailing stolons of past ages. With scalpel and pruning shears I dug my way into the human heart. And I found the wild, eternal spirit of man.

I chummed with magistrates and higher judges; with district attorneys and their assistants; with shysters and criminal lawyers; with court interpreters, turnkeys, and probation officers; with precinct captains, cops, detectives. I discussed ele-

mental problems with teachers of public schools, social workers, health nurses, doctors of city clinics ; with priests, parsons, rabbis. And I studied Freud, Kempf, Watson, White, and many other noted scientists.

A year of postgraduate work was the giddy spree of my life, and left me brimful of new knowledge. I had time to ponder a problem through and to play beside ; and I had never before had time to do either. I hiked through Broadway from Central Park to the Battery, smoked cigars and sipped wine in French cafés, talked golden hours with my teachers. I was elated beyond sound economics at my glorious first vacation. For I had won a fellowship.

I did class, case, and clinic work that year, learned the not so very difficult art of testing human "intelligence," whatever that term means, and could measure the "mental age" of man to within a month. I learned the art of interviewing secretive, sensitive, and seclusive human beings. (Many a poor soul had a forgotten feeling festering within.) I dug deep into man's confidence, circled around a focus, spiraled inward close to his core. The depth of a profound thought was only skin deep compared with that of a festering feeling. The two were interknit, like skin and flesh. And the one was stripped off to reach the other.

The case work was under the guidance of Doctor Bernhard Glueck, at a bureau established for

research on early mental disorders, for constructive aid to children with behavior problems, and for the training of psychiatric social workers. There I compiled detailed child histories and at weekly conferences read my findings to a staff of experts. I listened to their own findings on the child's inherited and acquired equipment. We sat in solemn conclave, in an era just begun, tuning the frail and delicate child-world to the harsher outside world, in a first attempt to prevent insanity.

I learned a thousand points of view from which to peer at the inner man. And I was careful not to take any point of view — my own included — too literally. For "the letter killeth."

The clinic work was done on a river isle, in sight of the bridge where once I swung upon a plank, grappling with death. It was a beautiful isle, but inhabited by eerie people: youths, young virgins, old seniles. Some rejoiced like angels and caroled with quavering trills, or uttered airy, buoyant love whispers. They walked serene and trance-like, or skipped along, sprite-like, or gamboled in enviable ecstasy. They hugged or leaned on or clung to or cuddled up to invisible lovers.

Others were bent down and broken with sorrow, bereaved to the point of limp anæsthesia, their spirit bleeding from loss of youth or loved ones, from loss of God or the Holy Ghost, — tenacious love-roots torn to shreds, — their hearts, warped by false modesty and by variegated values of virtue,

shrinking with regrets for loves that might have been.

Others were raging warriors, who fought the devil vehemently and hissed and snorted with the anger passion of the jungle, leaping from ambush into hell to tear their enemies to pieces, crawling out of their lair with wolfish stealth in their step, hair bristling, teeth and eyes glinting, their tongues inflamed with madness. Others were filled with fear; for every feeling has its opposite. Others again oscillated. One day elated and expansive with joyful exuberance, they warbled and flitted skyward, like song birds of spring. Depressed the next day, they lay in bed in limp, embryonic bundles, or sat in clusters on benches, head in lap, hair hanging, arms dangling, like stacks of rain-soaked sheaves.

There were weirder people still. The patterns and symbols within had unraveled and vanished forever, destroying the lessons of life. Thread by thread the habits had disintegrated, till nothing of the inner world was left to keep track of the outer world of things. Three of my best friends on that island of eerie people were Savors, flushed with excitement at the approach of Easter and crucifixion. One called me Thomas.

Others again, the weirdest type of all, though not the most hopeless, were like dead, mechanical mannikins. If I lifted an arm of these, it hung in the air for hours; if I bent their fingers or straight-

ened them out fanlike, they curved or strutted motionless; if I twisted the head, lifted the shoulder, turned the foot, the limbs stayed in position, dead as death itself. Heavy dead-weights they were, and hard to move, deader than corpses, for they lacked *rigor mortis*. They wore a marble mask of death upon their faces; and the night long some of them did not even rest the head on the pillow but would suspend it in the air. Yet they were limber and plastic, like clay before life had been blown into it. They were fed like babes with spoon and rubber tube. Like myself, they breathed life-sustaining air. And they lived in a world within their clay, for they were able to repeat to me, when days and weeks later they awoke, the questions I had asked my professors during clinic demonstrations.

I cannot leave out of this sketch a profound impression left upon my own scroll of life in prison camps. I should rather be an inmate of Ward's Island than a convict slave in a Southern prison camp.

I went South with a staff of scientists to study the convict in the swamps along the Gulf. Daily I mailed Margaret an account of the expedition. Without my knowledge she sent my correspondence to the *Atlantic Monthly*. Out of it grew an essay and, later, this book.

I am concerned here only with the theme of this

chapter, my search for an entrance to the underworld through the human heart. Turnkeys and picket bosses described the convict's conduct in the crowded sleeping hall at night, and prison guards his behavior in the cotton field where, mounted and armed to the teeth with shotgun, six-shooter, whip, lasso, they and their bloodhounds kept vigil. Stacks of written records showed me, beside his conflicts with society and his penal costs, his conflicts also with the convict colony and the prices paid in whippings and severer punishment. A staff of medical men, specialists all, told me his physical ailments, psychologists his mental age, psychiatrists their diagnosis of his inner conflicts.

Thirty-five hundred convicts — Negroes, Mexicans, whites, opened up their hearts to let me glance at their scrolls within. They sketched their lives in trenchant strokes, confiding their family, school, industrial, and criminal history to me.

The professional criminal was perhaps the most interesting convict, but he was by far in the minority. He liked to brag about his outlaw skill.

I held up a gambling-den and raked in the stakes, and shot a man who looked back too soon.

I held up a diner single-handed, and was caught with the booty soon after I jumped off the train.

I killed a man and got ninety-nine years, but got pardoned. Then I forged some checks and got par-

doned again. This time I got four years. And now we have a poor Governor. He pardons nobody.

There was another class of professionals, greater in number as convicts, but weak and unskilled in their profession, who always regretted their crooked deeds as soon as they were caught.

I've served three terms here and fourteen in the county jails. At nine I began in the reformatory. I am now twenty-five, and I have been at liberty only one year.

I was five times in the pen for stealing. But now I'm going to quit the game, because I am fifty, and because I have had bad luck since 1905.

By far the greatest number of professionals I found among the bootleggers, and most of these I am loath to call criminals — shaggy old rent-farmers, caught with a rusty still in the woods, pale bellhops from the city hotels, and a few prosperous importers.

First time I was in trouble I killed a fellow in a fight, and got freed, because I had a lawyer. Second time, a man found a quart of whiskey under my coat, and I got three years.

I sold thirty-five drinks to my friends. And I gets thirty-five years, a year for each drink, because the district attorney promised to free me if I told him the names of all my friends.

The majority of convicts consisted of casual or occasional offenders, scores of young lads who tried to forge a small check, clerks who erred, more responsible business men who speculated carelessly, a few bigamists, and a great number of petty thieves.

I tried to cash a ten-dollar check.

I broke into a store and stole myself eight suits of clothes and three pairs of shoes that all fitted me. And I got four years.

A big nigger told the judge I "highwayed" him and stole three cents from him. I only asked him to tell me the road to town. And I got five years.

The first time, I busted a door and stole myself a girl and ran away and married her. I paid \$14.85 fine for the damages done. The second time, I stole a little hog and ate him. And I got five years for that.

My first wife died; my second wife refused to divorce me; and my third wife is worth the two years I spend here for bigamy.

From the time of Moses the law has fallen heavily upon the sex-offender.

I kissed a rich American girl, señor. Fifteen years must I pay for that kiss.

A thin, epileptic wreck of a Negro, with three scarlet letters, C-U-T, branded deep into his cheeks and forehead, told me, "I did n't do it. I did n't do it." And he shook his head wearily.

The stories of seven hundred murderers could be

formulated thus: an irritating situation, a fight, a rented gun, a murder. *Ira furor brevis est.*

I bought a dog from a boy. And his brother loved that dog, so he shoots it because I own it; and he shoots me too. I shot him down.

A man stole my eleven dollars. I fought him with my gun to get back my money.

A bad nigger said I owed him two bits, which I did n't. The next morning was Sunday, and I took my shotgun with me to church to defend myself. We had a fight outside the church.

During the fight, often the wrong person got killed, apparently. And occasionally no fight took place at all.

I was arguing with my wife's father about a fence, and we began to shoot each other. Then my wife ran between us; and she ran right into one of the bullets.

I shot my wife's sweetheart, and a bullet hit my wife's head because she shielded him.

I killed my sister in 1909 by fooling with a gun. I asked the Governor to pardon me when he was here last. "I've been here fifteen years," I told him. But he answered me like this: "And your sister that you shot has been dead fifteen years."

The situation was often graver.

My friend was kissing my wife, and he says to me: "Friendship and love are two different things." So I shot him,

I got one hundred and sixteen years for fighting with my wife, her mother, and my sweetheart. I shot them all three dead.

No one could prove that the rented gun, found in the hip pocket of every free man in the state, from the feeble-minded Negro drunkard to the senator, was the prime cause of these accidental crimes of anger. There were a few exceptions, but only a few, where the knife played the rôle.

That nigger loved my sweetheart too. We had a little scrimmage. I cut him in the head, once only. And he died in ten minutes.

There were other exceptions to the general formula, a few cases where immediate environmental factors might be excluded as the primary cause. The law of chance would hardly give any man more than one kill in his lifetime, even in a state where guns were as popular as food and clothes. When a convict repeated a murder it might, therefore, not be improper first to look for the primary cause in his mental and physical make-up.

I got fifty years for killing a man. I got fifty years more for killing another man. I got five years more for killing a third man. And I got eleven years the fourth time for felonious assault. I got pardoned three times, but not this time, and I did n't even kill him.

The premeditated murder was rare indeed. The offender committing a crime of this nature was

generally, during the act, moved by an abnormal emotional tide which for a time flooded the avenues of his intellect; or either his reason or his emotions might be deteriorated.

I could n't get along with my wife, so I decided to kill her. We went into the cotton field, where I shot her. I went right back and gave myself up.

I soaked my husband's sweetheart in gasoline and stuck fire to her.

Among the convicts charged with the crime of murder or manslaughter, a few persistently claimed that they were innocent. Some of those were bitter; others posed as martyrs; some were agitated like trapped animals. They usually shed tears when they told me their story.

I knowed nothing about the murder. A man was robbed and killed. And the next morning the sheriff grabbed me and nearly hung me up. I swear to Almighty God I never saw the man. I knowed nothing about it until the sheriff came. And here I am for life.

Such were the songs of these children in captivity.

How eagerly my country, no longer "new," for I had lived here longer than in the old country, sought social facts! A new scientific era suddenly rose before my eyes, an epoch-making dawn that shall be known in history. Chromosomes were counted and blended into new combinations. In the test tube, endocrine fluids — the elixir of life —

were synthesized. Ova of lower life were fertilized by a hatpin or a pinch of table salt. Infants were rushed from the mother's womb into the skillful hands of the scientist, there to reveal the greatest discovery of all times, because the most useful to human happiness — the formation of habits, the making of the human "soul."

Like old carpets, children were rewoven, so to speak, to save them from further fatal unraveling; youths were patched up to save them from the prison bars. Social responsibility rather than individual, prevention rather than cure, cure rather than punishment, these were the slogans of a new enlightened age. What had changed the human heart? Thus I had wondered from the time in my childhood when I listened to the grand old rescue captain who sprang from pirate stock. Rescue crews began to spread throughout the land to learn the hardest task of all, that of salvaging shipwrecked "souls" and "spirits."

Though science could not control all the factors of man's environment through the tender prenatal world and infancy, childhood, and adolescence, through the spinning and weaving period of the myriad-colored patterns of experience, yet it was no less than marvelous — as I saw so often — how man began life in a new furrow when science shifted his environment or adjusted his inner world a tiny hair's breadth.

The thickness of a newspaper enabled a man to

reach the nail on which to hang himself. One of my friends in the South killed his best friend because of a single match stick. A flimsy feeling had made many a murderer. A breath of air stood between life and death, as I so vividly realized in my own childhood. Yet a slight change in the point of view and in the environment — and man learned to get along with himself and to live in harmony with others.

Science was lifting the underworld out of drainage level. And I was giving a shoulder.

VIII

THE INWARD EPIC

My eyes could scan the bridge of my nose without the aid of a mirror, and even my brow; but they viewed my chest better, and my fists and feet best of all. Things too close were out of focus. Also when I peeped within.

Early in life I grouped things by the feelings these stirred, whether it were a warm potato burning my gullet or the sea beyond the dunes tenaciously drawing my heart. I grew aware of myself by the garden, the tannery, the sailor inn, and the wooden-shoe shop. So vividly, indeed, that I still foster choking horrors for decayed gardens, nauseating panics at oxtail soups, sacred awes for beer barrels, voluptuous cravings for the smell of wood.

I should never have known nor remembered things, save for the feelings they stirred within. Both were real — things and feelings. Of that I was sure. Yet the two were certainly not alike. They grew up together, my feelings revealing the nature of things that my senses heard, touched, saw, smelled, tasted. Things were ugly or beautiful, good or bad, vital, deadly, or the gamut be-

tween, according to their grip upon my flesh. My feelings kept tab on things. A dish of sailor scouse and a sniff of sea air bore my body new life. A borrowed dory, rigged with lateen sail, spiced my life. But the horse butcher's gun, propped into my mouth, blew out my life if I pulled the trigger.

My feelings were the code of the beast. But I kept tab on things, not only by the code of the beast — also by the code of man. I became a beast *plus* by hoarding names of things — food my tongue tasted, tools my hand touched, names of many, many things. The spoken word was a body gesture and so was the written. Both echoed within and dipped themselves in juicy tissue and splashed all over my flesh. They stirred the very feelings things themselves aroused — though in a gentler gamut and less zealously. For words, no matter how vicarious, were not so vital nor so deadly as things, yet they took hold in much deeper tissue and clung with synthetic grips that no concrete outside composition ever could rival.

And I learned still other codes by which to chat and cavil with myself and with my fellow man: winks of eyes and eyelids like lovers, finger signals like Fjolle Valde, signs and symbols of mathematics. I sketched things to be made from raw material — front, side, and top views. With pencil and T-square I gestured. With tools and raw material the shop mechanic gestured. Things I “told” him to make took shape. And we should

never have struck such consistent harmonies save for my code of sketches.

Sculpture, painting, all fine arts, I also came to regard as codes by which things were symbolized — gestures caught on canvas and marble echoing through the world within and often setting it astir with an awful potency, or with light and delicate touches where things themselves failed. For my senses caught but shallow, flitting things, while artists rendered their depth and motion as well. How often have I not watched Wickey's trenchant gestures gather on the copper plate and vanish smoothly in the surface sheen, leaping to my eye and holding it, edging into my nerves, muscles, glands — salubrious gestures, baited with the past, present, and future, snaring truth on the wing as no science could, prodding my flesh, stitching up wounds within. Like flying sea gulls, these gestures talked less equivocally than did the human voice. For they never collided.

Pilate's question was the wisest ever asked. I had already at the rope-spinnery noticed how speed and distance blurred truth; for far on the horizon the spinners were black dots, save when I peered through my boss's telescope. Close at hand they were old graybeards. And their beards grew too slowly and their fingers spun too swiftly for my eyeballs.

When I delved deeper into things at Cooper Union, I found that truth was more tangled than

in my childhood on the coast of Jutland — so complex that my senses could not even skim its surface. Scientific apparatus led me to truths I should otherwise never have snared. But things moved too slowly and too swiftly even for my instruments. I should never pierce the heart of anything.

Chemistry and physics aroused the least tumult. For the things I captured — weights of air at sea level and on the mountain top, weights of iron in the North and in the South, water, steam, ice, ashes, smoke, coal — I could lasso by mathematics. Elements now familiar were isolated yesterday; more might be before my death. One element bombarded begins to give birth to another. The elixir of life is being synthesized. The alchemist's dream of making gold is not far off — nor Loeb's, of making life in a test tube.

Living things were more obscure than coal and water. They changed more swiftly and also more slowly. They were shy, elusive, hard to seize. The code I tagged them with was not indelible like mathematics, nor trenchant like an etching. Facts outgrew their attire of words. For science, like society, displayed its godly knowledge of good and evil all too swiftly, or else garbed it — from fig leaf to hoop skirt and return — all too slowly. Biology, therefore, aroused a chafing conflict. How well I remember my freshman revolts! Yet I prodded deep enough into living things to lance and label life. I saw myself designed in the image

of the beast, a motile composition compared to the smear of infancy I adored before. Each corpuscle of my blood — and I have twenty-five million millions according to the last census — each corpuscle alone contained billions of molecules, and each molecule contained 2400 atoms, water molecules having only three. Each atom was a solar system, with planets balanced by speeds and orbits, like stars in the firmament, never colliding save by a festering sliver. For this was Doomsday in miniature.

Psychology, dealing with deeper things still, love and hunger, thinking and feeling, was more alluring, yet also more coy than any other science. For things of my own inner world were more capricious than sun and atom, and hardest of all to trap and tame and name. This science, therefore, stirred up a civil war within that all but bled me white.

I made a guess that ages back, when man's organism was less known, speculators who like myself ached for things forbidden divided their inner world in two. Unknown parts they symbolized in the image of abstract gods, known parts in the image of concrete beasts. Some functions of the flesh were veiled with *mystikos*, — "close the lips or eyes," — others furbished brilliantly by blood and bone, brain and brawn. This the speculators did to find peace within and to save the Union, to stretch eternity, and to hide their ignorance. But

any dualism split me in two; and that I knew was dangerous, for words were bitter brutes when they clashed.

I quarreled with my friends on finer points and with myself on finer still. For I was never quite the selfsame man at any two moments, nor were my friends, collectively, at any one. They could not stand on one spot at the same interval, nor could I stand on one spot at various times and see what once I saw. We should never have a single, solitary point of view in common — thank God. Even identical twins, coming as they do from the same egg and sperm, vary widely. One found her toes prior to her sister, one his thumb before his brother; one was always born ahead of the other and might prepare the way for a master.

I had been born again, not once nor twice, but many times throughout my life. Day by day experience sketched a more composite picture within. My older “selves” lay buried beneath newborn gestures. Yet I recognized their mongrel shadows jutting out of my present self, as I did the pencil strokes of my friend when he sketched my youngest boy — the face growing up at the speed of years per minute, lips and eyelids crammed with smiles and pouts and droops of babyhood, forgotten days of joys and sorrows, fears and angers, ensnared by pencil darts.

Yes, I recognized my selves as I browsed through the old editions. But how should I unravel their

continuum? I stood aghast, freed or trapped as I was by heredity and by a life of hazard learning and by a million things that sped or blocked my plays. Every pebble I had tossed into the sea still shook the universe. For all labor is *mobile perpetuum*.

My finger nail alone was a living library. The stuff of which the nail was made always was, and would forever be. Some fifty inches I had trimmed throughout my life; the trimmings were somewhere still — always would be. Weeks and months and years ago my nail was in the food I ate; ages back, in the horse's hoof, the eagle's beak, the fish's scales, or in a thousand other things perhaps. My finger nail was tougher than my reason and feelings. It would be the last of me to die; it would even grow in the grave — unless I be cremated.

Yet the story of my finger nail could not satiate my hunger to find the causes of my reason and feelings. Nor could the grander drama of my sires and offspring cloy my appetite. Nor could the epics of my masters glut my craving. My eyeballs, tired — oh, so tired — of looking for the rarest morsel, feasted on the inner life of others. All my friends were like the sea when winds and tides took hold — playmates of my childhood world, sailor boys, immigrants in the New World, my mate and boys in the world of love, Doomsday friends of the unknown world, students and teachers at Alma Mater, children of the underworld.

Like the sea, I myself was tossed by winds and tides.

My instincts, love and hunger, were the winds and tides. They hauled me seaward or shoreward, or they tugged or rammed at me. My habits, reason, and feelings, were the winds and tides. They dragged me, or they jammed or tore me. My instincts and habits were the winds and tides. They towed me, or they split and crushed me. My feelings paired off—joys and sorrows, fears and angers. They united, or they fought or fled; they shoved me, or they pressed or rent me. My reason paired off—concrete and abstract skills, doing and thinking. They drew me seaward or shoreward, or they collided or pulled me apart.

Discords there were and harmonies, a play of lusts—instincts, tenacious in their struggle for existence; habits, hale in their pioneering for a fuller life; feelings, firm in their claim for beauty; reason, robust in its demand for truth. But what the inner things that lusted were I knew not, nor how. I pined for my Narcissus images reflected in the sea. I called them passionate pieces of poetry. For “poetry is an imaginative response to experience.”

Mathematical-minded thinkers helped me. I held them up in the street as the Ancient Mariner did the wedding guest. And when I had told my story they spoke. Heliocentrically, truth was the universe—past, present, future. Egocentrically,

truth was all the fleeting things that found my senses. Crude attributes — smoothness, shape, motion, hardness, weight — seized my eyes and ears, nose and fingers, while a myriad of finer passed me by. These were *my* truths. My animal code of feelings was one step, my human code of words two steps, my definition of names three steps beyond these nibblings of fleeting events. And when I defined my definitions, my truths were a million steps away from my good neighbors' — so misty were things, feelings, words.

My private system, in fact, was but seven varieties of lies. For things altered or vanished among transient colors; the hues of my emotions changed from day to day and were at best deceptive revelations; words rose and fell in glory year by year, and were but a verbiage of tinted falsehoods. And beside confusing colors, hues, tints, things were shaded — from black lies of ignorance and gray lies of dreams to white lies of excuses. And they were saturated, from surface to core, with deliberate fibs.

Yet I should not be abashed to know, they averred, that from the heliocentric point of view I sheltered a litter of illusions — a distorted awareness of truth; and that I hatched a nest of hallucinations — garbled sounds and sights, tastes and touches, wrongly credited to truth; and that I herded a drove of delusions — a confused deciphering *of* and fancies too fantastic to plumb *with* truth. For I was not the only one,

And, after all, I was not in quest of the whole universe. I was only trying to capture these inner things that did my thinking and feeling — the things that kept me awake. I was but trying to orient my psychology as I had my chemistry and biology. What if things were but fleeting flocks of attributes, most of which ignored my senses! Things nevertheless behaved with recognizable uniformity, even with a certain predictable uniformity. And what if my codes that kept track of things altered as my life grew fuller and became less elemental, facts farthest away remaining clear and constant compared to those near at hand! What if my code of words were a fickle substitute *for* and my code of feelings a capricious revealer *of* things! My codes did string time into my flesh — all my hoarded moments from birth to death they strung side by side. For things continued to echo there. “Intelligence and Time are identical terms.”

My first and only chew of tobacco, they ventured to guess, would be my last. And the juicy vocabulary of my childhood would never grow stale — especially those curses. From day to day through life I had recognized things in the rough, as these stirred my skin and deeper tissue. And I was able to convey my experiences from my past selves to my present self, as one age conveyed its to another age, and as one man conveyed his to another man. That was the gist of egocentric “truth.”

Yes, the gist. They clarified the mystery within, but I was not able to follow their formulæ as I was the chemist's and biologist's. Their code was not translatable, though that was not their fault. I found a disunited kingdom of heaven and hell among the motions of heart, arteries, stomach, among the gestures of my tongue and larynx, and among the actions of my glands. God and Devil dwelt in the eternal jungle of my love and hunger, made depredations on each other in the cultivated garden of habits. Begot in the conjugal union of my blood, the dueling majesties were my carnal organism. Born in the poignant travails of my brawn, they were my moving muscles. Nursed in the succulent marrow of my bones, they were my animal body. Reared in the cells of my brain, they were my living flesh. But the epic within was harder to grasp than the Miltonic.

My inner world was a stage of players acting the drama of the flesh. Heliocentrically, truth was too grand an epic for me to stage, or even whisper about. For it was the Nameless Absolute, the *I AM* of Exodus, the Alpha and Omega of the Revelation. My own private universe—egocentric truth—was hard enough to reproduce in drama form. But I enjoyed my Little Theatre and also those of my fellow men, more modern, or less, than mine.

There was art in the inner drama, vivid beauty preserved from old experience to ease the birth of

new ones. And through all the plays ran a common thread, the innate *power of words*, which led me to a formula. The psychoanalyst convinced me of their therapeutic value. The behaviorist revealed the causes of their power. And causes were all I needed to trail the fleeting things within.

Words worked. I read advertisements, and thrills ran up and down my spine. My tongue smacked for possession and my fingers itched to stroke things that words portrayed. And soon I did stroke things—tulip bulbs for my garden, books and brands of rare tobacco for my den, tools and hardware for my cellar shop. For “Ask, and it shall be given you” was truer than ever. The prayer book of yesterday had become the advertising page of to-day.

The prayers of my noble Evangelic in-laws were a magic road to untold riches. For prayers echoed through larynx and diaphragm, deep down into their viscera, each word soaked with feelings and wishes, stirring the tissue to greater harmony and therefore to more united action, rehabilitating a barren inner world, playing a drama that raised the flesh from the grave.

And the confessional of my charming Catholic in-laws was another magic road. There they chewed their cud over, word for word, and gained added nurture. There penalty was doled out in terms of prayers and good deeds, and they went out to pay their debt and to gain richer feelings

still. They thrive — healthy ruminants that they were. For they lived close to the world of things and to the world of words, and prolonged their tastes and aftertastes by three or four chewings.

My wealthy idealist in-laws found a third magic road — that of “denying” the reality of obnoxious things and “declaring” the reality of pleasing abstractions, till festering feelings were buried beneath a new vocabulary, and finer feelings followed, and harmony reigned within. It worked. That I knew. For most of man’s diseases were functional rather than structural, conflicting habits rather than rotting bones, the lutes and lyres within being sound enough, but the tunes played being out of synchrony. And why should this vocal method of denying and declaring not work? No matter how many steps man fled from solid earth, the power of the word gave him a lift. Of course, his structure torn by bullets, age, bacteria, needed more than a magic word to patch it. Though my idealist in-laws argued — using my vernacular — that if bodily tissue were shot to shreds not only by obnoxious things outside but also by dueling habits of words and feelings, — a theory that I had been careless enough to suggest, — then salubrious habits of words and feelings should be able to heal the shattered tissue as well as did salubrious things. Within certain limits that perhaps were true.

The written word had placed upon the head of

man a crown in miniature of more than one *omni*: omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience. For it had hooked time and space. By the written word I lived the drama of the earth's inhabitants — those that were dead and those that were alive. By it I followed man up from the mud, played robber and soldier, attended to politics, pursued scandals, and made jaunts through the arts and sciences. By it the reader followed me up from childhood.

Chaucer's tales ran through my throat in the succulent English of six hundred years ago; Ludvig Holberg's comedies in quaint old Danish; Ivar Aasen's *Symra* in an old viking dialect; Strindberg's drama in strong Swedish; Suderman's novels in slow, lugubrious German; Eugene O'Neill's plays in my own dear tongue. Moderns and ancients lived within me as vividly perhaps as they had lived within themselves. Words of poet, scientist, and philosopher fell upon me like a landslide, burying my old selves. The flaming Doomsday prophet died entirely. Wise men disagreed, for things had too many points of view. But the power of the word kept me awake. I lived the lives of my masters while I was living my own string of lives, adding thousands of other points of view to my own.

Watson oriented me in psychology by turning me to physiology, showing me how viscera of all animals were deceived or persuaded into automatic

action. Meat watered the mouth of dogs. Salivary flow varied to the drop with the weight of the chunk. If a bell rang when the dog saw meat, the bell alone would later whet its appetite, and, miracle of miracles, would sluice saliva at a rate of flow that corresponded to the right meat chunk. If a gong sounded or a light flashed, or a dozen other substitutes were ushered in when the bell rang, — lately even a kick on the dog's rump, and minus the meat chunk, — then the salivary flow would correspond to the drop with that at first produced by the meat chunk. A larger chunk sluiced more saliva. So did sounds and lights and kicks linked up with the larger chunk. Viscera and motor muscles were "kidded." For substitutes were as potent as genuine stimuli.

I began to grasp the mechanism of my inner world. My body had been led into keeping itself awake by a thousand substitute things that were linked up closely or remotely to genuine stimuli. Each experience throughout my life was tied to strings of substitute things, sluicing my feelings exactly as chunks of meat and their strings of substitutes sluiced the dog's saliva. For feelings were gestures of glands and viscera — an orchestra played within, and not always harmoniously.

Watson experimented with infants as physiologists with dogs. He showed me that a little human beastie learned to fear and hate and love an endless chain of substitutes in the world of

things. Children caught and grouped things in terms of body responses. He built up their habits of fears, hatreds, loves, by which they kept track of the ever growing world outside.

He convinced me that names also sluiced my feelings as well as concrete substitutes. Names were substitutes for things, as was the ring of a bell or the toot of a horn for chunks of meat. Names of food increased my salivary flow as did the food I ate. This I knew from those romantic days at Cornwall, when Margaret taught me names of foods as she fed me. My vocabulary was a closely knitted habit-pattern like my feelings. My experiences linked themselves to my feeling habits, to my manual habits, to my vocal habits. I kept myself awake by a world of substitutes within, as I did by a world of substitutes outside. Either stirred my feelings. And in that I was more than a beast; for the dog was stirred by outer things only — chunks of meat and strings of outer substitutes. I was stirred by inner substitutes as well, by names of things. I kept myself awake when the outside world vanished, by talking to myself.

I *thought* with gestures of my larynx, limbs, and deeper organs, by my feelings like beasts, aloud like children, in whispers like lovelorn youths, subvocally like adults. Creative thinking was the knack of mixing concrete things and juggling abstract symbols into new combinations. The word,

spoken or written, was not the tool of thinking; it was thinking itself. With words I brought things into fresher enmity and amity. For when words blended, things coalesced; and vice versa, when things blended, words coalesced. My larynx thought when I spoke, and my fingers when I handled tools. But since my vocal habits were more prodigious than my manual, my larynx thought more than did my limbs. And the lutes and lyres of my feelings thought most of all. For they always accompanied limbs and larynx.

A few more gestures and the portrait is finished. I sit in my garden at the mouth of the great harbor, closed in by latticework and shaded by morning-glory and honeysuckle vines. The flora of spring and summer have vanished as I complete this book. Fall is here. Chrysanthemums are in bloom.

The Los Angeles passes over my head and disappears in the harbor mist — another thriller, like Alma Mater and the Broadway canyon. The day long, aeroplanes soar above my garden. They are familiar now. Yet, less than twenty years ago, I watched Glenn Curtiss in his epoch-making flight from Albany to Manhattan. The flight from Rome to Nome is no longer a dream. Columbus I never saw, nor Leif Ericson; but this summer I elbowed my way through the crowd and, flushed

with thrills of this glorious age, shook hands with Nobile, Amundsen, Ellsworth, Byrd, and Bennett.

Incoming freighters toot in the Bay. Seeds of morning-glory vine rattle in their capsules. Chrysanthemums rise and sway in rich and noble clusters. A pair of bluebells of Scotland that the fall sun failed to close eye me wistfully. Beauty enthalls me. Beauty!

The sun is sinking beyond the harbor forts. The evening breeze shakes the vine and blows through the latticework. A window lights up. Margaret is making supper. She sends me a smile through the dusk. Behind her, eager faces are bending over grinning pumpkin heads. My heart begins to thump; for to-morrow Junior and I sail out from Sheepshead Bay for sprattling cod.

The glow in my pipe turns scarlet. A lone star peeps through the fragrant honeysuckle vine. I light a candle lantern, hanging on a lattice strip, and Rembrandtesque shadows leap along with my pencil. Needle-, pin-, and leaf-pine talk to me in sombre whispers. They speak of a rich romance here in the garden, and of camp fires at night in northwestern woods, and of starlit nights at Cornwall on the Hudson, where a girl of seventeen hummed the Cardinal's hymn. They speak of a Danish beech grove where long ago I caught a glimpse of Hamlet's and Holger Danske's castle; and of a cozy cottage across the sea where an old couple are raising four grandchildren; and

of an old, old grandfather I have not seen these many years. They speak of heather, bog, and dune.

Yes — Pilate's question was the wisest ever asked. And Keats's advice was the sagest ever given.

Oh ye! who have your eyeballs vexed and tired,
Feast them upon the wideness of the sea.

Slender arms embrace me in our garden at the mouth of the great harbor. I stir, and hear myself whistling, "Lead, kindly light."

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